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ABSTRACT

A product of the three-year West Indian Project of the Family Service Association in Toronto, this book seeks to share with helping professionals insights into Caribbean cultures and some significant issues that impede or facilitate working with West Indians. The first chapter outlines the historical development of the Caribbean, focusing on the social and psychological effects of slavery that have lingered long after emancipation. The second chapter describes the social and cultural background of the West Indies, stressing the racial diversity and the close links between class and color. The characteristics of the various classes and the role of family structures are also discussed. The third chapter outlines the factors motivating the mass migration from the Caribbean during the late 1960s and early 1970s and discusses the crisis effects of migration. In the fourth chapter effective methods of engaging the West Indian client in counselling are outlined, notably methods of explaining the process to the client and of helping him/her overcome negative self-concepts, fatalism, dependency, and hostility. The role of religion and magic is also discussed. The final section describes the West Indian Project in terms of: (1) project implementation; (2) location; (3) client demographies; (4) presenting problems; (5) associated problems; (6) children; (7) category of service at termination; and (8) professional implications. (RDN)

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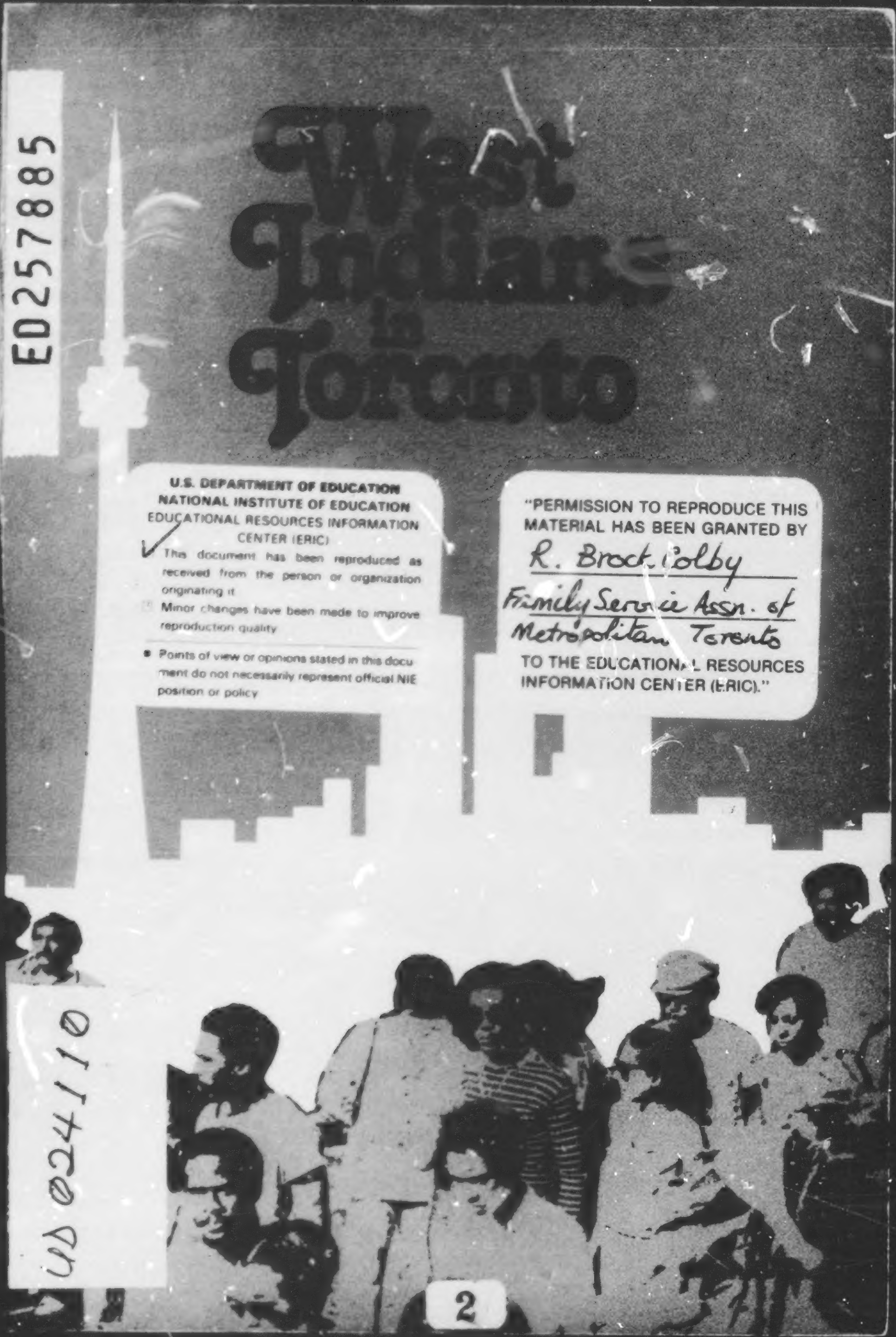

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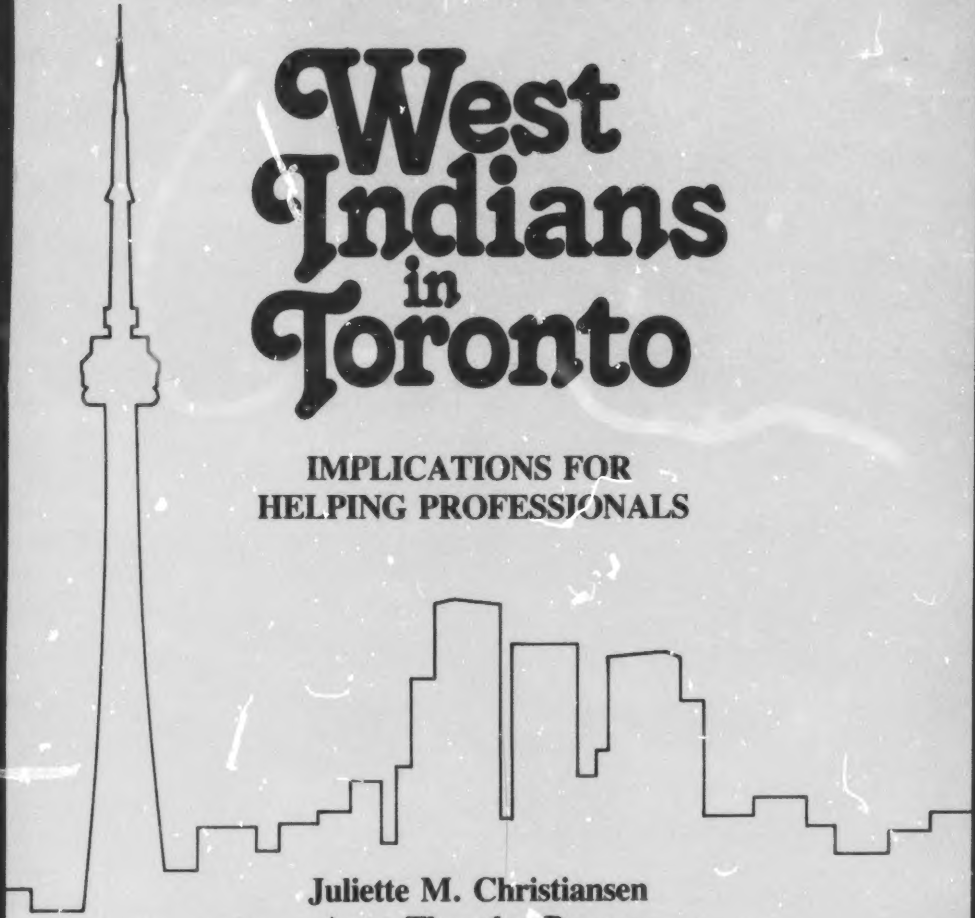

West Indians in Toronto

IMPLICATIONS FOR HELPING PROFESSIONALS

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Juliette M. Christiansen
Anne Thornley-Brown
Jean A. Robinson

PREFACE

In recent years the number of West Indians entering Canada has increased significantly. The great majority of these immigrants have settled in the two major urban areas of Toronto and Montreal, with a small influx of professionals settling in Halifax and Vancouver.

As the number of West Indian immigrants settling in Toronto increased, so did the number of families requesting service from the Family Service Association. These families were experiencing multiple difficulties but were failing to remain in contact with the agency. It soon became apparent that the agency needed to examine its service delivery system to this client group. Generic methods of intervention seemed to be ineffective in engaging clients. Furthermore, in discussions with professionals from the courts, schools and Children's Aid Societies, it was confirmed that many West Indian families were experiencing serious social difficulties; the professionals also indicated that their services were not meeting the needs of this client group either.

The Family Service Association, in keeping with its mandate, "Strength to Families Under Stress", therefore committed itself to make the agency's services relevant in meeting the needs of Toronto's multi-ethnic population. In keeping this commitment, the decision was made to channel some of its resources into increasing the service understanding, sensitivity and effectiveness with this diverse client group. That undertaking was implemented by the designing of a special three-year West Indian Project, funded jointly by the Ministry of Culture and Recreation, Wintario and United Way. The goals of this project were to:

- sensitize staff within the agency through training programs that focused on the special implications of West Indian culture for the agency's family counselling;
- extend this sensitization to other professionals in Metro community agencies and institutions;
- document those issues that have significant influence in the adaptation of generic techniques to a minority Canadian cultural group.

Attaining the goals of this project entailed hiring a West Indian worker whose initial duty was that of outreach to community agencies and institutions having contact with West Indian families. From this outreach originated the referrals and requests for counselling activities of the project. In working with these clients, knowledge was gained about cultural aspects necessitating the adaptation of generic counselling techniques. The experience also helped in the development of a culture-specific family life education program.

Sensitizing staff with the Family Service Association, as well as those in other organizations, was achieved through workshops. These focused on a generalized description of the cultural patterns manifested by West Indians, the problems inherent in migration and adjustment, and the implications for social services to West Indian families

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INTRODUCTION

The goal of this book is to share with helping professionals insights into Caribbean cultures and some significant issues that impede or facilitate working with West Indians. When we speak of West Indians we are referring to people from different cultures and ethnic groups who have settled in the Caribbean under varying circumstances. West Indians are black, varying shades between black and white, East Indian, Chinese, Portuguese, Lebanese, Palestinian, Jewish and European.

The first question we anticipate is: why a chapter on history dating back to the 15th century? We contend that a basic understanding of the historical forces that shaped Caribbean cultures is vital to the development of an approach for working with clients from these territories. The history of the Caribbean has been one of exploitation and of oppression, with their attendant psycho-social ills. These have had far-reaching implications for Caribbean people in their efforts to develop stable and viable societies. Issues inherent in this struggle, after centuries of demoralizing tyranny, for the Black* majority, are of the greatest significance for the cultures that evolved out of those historical experiences.

Discussions throughout this book focus on the similarities among Caribbean territories. We acknowledge that there are differences between these territories, but our concern here is with the evolution of the major institutions that have their foundations in similar historical experiences. Unlike North America where slavery was but a single period in its history, the entire Caribbean had its beginnings in slavery, an experience that literally caused the disappearance of native populations and their traditions in most territories. Studies of Caribbean territories reveal greater internal than inter-territorial differences.

Slavery, and its impact on the shaping of Black cultures in the New World, is a topic that gives rise to much controversy. The authors agree with those scholars who contend that colonization and slavery cannot be ignored in any discussion on the development of Caribbean societies. All cultures evolve out of their past institutions with their intrinsic philosophies; it therefore is not credible to assume that contemporary Caribbean social institutions evolved out of a vacuum. Neither is it likely that the institution of slavery, which came to an end less than six generations** ago, had not helped to influence contemporary institutions.

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*Black is capitalized throughout this writing when referring to Blacks vis-a-vis other racial or ethnic groups; it is not capitalized when used as an adjective.

**150 years

An objective analysis of these institutions does show a clear link to past history. African traditions were grossly modified or replaced by attitudes and behaviours developed to cope with the harshness of slavery. These have been transmitted from one generation to the next via the socialization process.

> " . . . . Some of the patterned behaviours that we frequently recognize within Black cultures were originally developed to keep us alive. They originally had a definite survival value. They are a testimony to the strength, inventiveness, and determination of our people . . . . our refusal to give up as a people. Even chronic patterns can have "get-us-by" survival value. Today many of these responses to mistreatment have become imbedded in our culture, but they no longer serve a useful function. Instead, these so-called "elements of Black culture" operate to lock us into our roles as victims of oppression." (Lipsky, 1978)*

It is on these bases that the authors have given credence to the concept of oppression and its attendant ills. The facts are that there was little or no attempt made to help freed slaves to improve their economic condition after emancipation, and the greater percentage of the population remained oppressed; these are the root causes of many current socio-economic problems in the Caribbean. The establishment of a costly educational system could not be afforded by the Black majority. Hence they were not equipped to compete successfully within the established socio-economic structure. Furthermore, this education instilled in its recipients European values and attitudes that encouraged an acceptance of the status quo and the continued negation of African traditions and attributes, reinforcing a class system that was based both on colour and on the acquisition of European values and attitudes.

The majority Black population, having been denied access to the educational system and social mobility, was denied simultaneously the opportunity to re-establish socio-economic structures reminiscent of the African market economy based on ownership of arable land and cattle rearing. Relegated to rocky hill slopes or very small plots of arable land and refused monetary credit, the majority resorted to subsistence farming, which perpetuated poverty and oppression. This gave rise to a folk culture that has as its foundation modified African traditions in combination with certain patterns of behaviour that were survival mechanisms during slavery. The minority that did obtain an education internalized the school-taught middle class European values, which set them apart from the majority. Both educated and non-educated Blacks thus pay homage to middle class values and attitudes; the poorest individuals strive for education and social mobility. Many have attained these but for the vast majority it is a near impossibility. There have been attempts to change the oppressive structures that have locked so many into poverty, but the process is excruciatingly slow, causing many to resort to migration in their search for better opportunities.

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*See also William H. Grier and Price M. Cobbs, "Black Rage" 1968.

Migration and adjustment to a new society is an anxiety-provoking experience. Many cope successfully with this process; others are thrust into crisis and come to the attention of social agencies. It is instructive to note that the majority of clients we have seen throughout our three-year project were Black and of lower socio-economic status. This is, however, not much different from other ethnic groups in Canada recently. The common denominator here is poverty and oppression. Since Blacks, historically, have been a most severely oppressed group, an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of oppression is crucial in the planning of effective intervention to cure and prevent the resulting social and individual problems.

In addressing the topic of oppression, we include the victim as well as the oppressor. An individual can be in both roles simultaneously, but either position is emotionally painful and destructive. When victims respond to oppression with destructive behaviours they are essentially oppressing themselves and very often these responses are oppressive to others. The oppressors likewise oppress themselves with the psychological burden of this role. Since oppression weakens the ego, growth and development are dependant on one's willingness and ability to embark on a process of honest self-examination, insight building and the courage to resist oppressive forces (including self-oppression). As Lipsky 1978 has stated:

> "We know that every hurt or mistreatment, if not discharged (healed), will create a distress pattern (some form of rigid, destructive or ineffective feeling and behaviour) in the victim of this mistreatment. This distress pattern, when re-stimulated, will tend to push the victim through a re-enactment of the original distress experience either with someone else in the victim role or, when this is not possible, with the original victim being the object of her/his own distress pattern."

The individual who is able to effectively fight these forces can take meaningful adult control of her or his life. Individuals who approach helping professionals are seeking help in their attempt to accomplish this goal. The helping professional, black or white, needs a high degree of sensitivity and understanding as to the dynamics of oppression.

As black helping professionals, we, the authors, have often been consulted by other professionals seeking special techniques for working with black clients. There are no new or special techniques, however. The most important issue in working with West Indian clients is that of engagement in the counselling process. Because this is an unfamiliar experience to which clients bring their own sets of expectations, the onus rests with the professional to clarify roles and expectations. Meaningful engagement is further facilitated by a *sincere realization* of the principles that foster the helping relationship. Carrying out the real meaning of these principles frees the professional to work with clients from any population — race, culture, religion, sexual orientation. In this position professionals are unencumbered by fear, discomfort and embarrassment when confronted with unfamiliar values and attitudes. They are therefore able to request information that clarifies issues and builds understanding, enhancing the development of trust in the therapeutic relationship leading to growth and problem resolution.

CHAPTER I

Historical Background

The Caribbean is thought by many to be one of the most picturesque regions of the world. The nations within the Caribbean share a hot, tropical climate, rich soil and lush vegetation. Natural resources found within the region are large deposits of bauxite in Jamaica and Guyana*, and oil and natural gas in Trinidad. Other resources in these and other areas include copper, zinc, lead and gypsum.

In the Caribbean there is a high concentration of young nations that have only recently received their independence from European powers. They share a history that includes: colonization by a European power, enslavement of the indigenous population, importation of slaves from West Africa and indentured servants from various parts of Europe and the Asian continent, post-World War II struggles against neo-colonialist control of their economies.

Due to a unique combination of historical circumstances (typical also of other New World societies) the Caribbean has drawn to it people from virtually every part of the globe. Each Caribbean nation, however, has been able to preserve its uniqueness, probably because of the relative isolation (until recent decades) of each territory from the others. As Lowenthal (1972) observed: "A West Indian island really is a world. Polynesians and Melanesians, more at home with the ocean, make it a highway instead of a barrier, but the Caribbean Sea more often constrains and attenuates the social network."[1] Examples of uniqueness in the territories are differences in language, ethnic composition, diet and music, to name a few. Notwithstanding, this chapter focuses not on the differences but on the common threads that characterize the histories and cultures of the Caribbean countries. Mason (1972) observed that although each territory is unique, there is a strong resemblance between them. Closer study of these territories seems at first to underline their societal differences but later reasserts their resemblance.[2]

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*Although Guyana (formerly British Guiana) is a South American country, it is generally included with the West Indies because of its colonization by Great Britain and its similarity in historical development to the Caribbean islands.

Early History

The first known inhabitants of the Caribbean were the Arawak and Carib Amerindians. Both originated in northern South America. The Arawaks who inhabited the Greater Antilles have been described as a very peaceful people who lived in "semi-permanent" villages composed of clusters of bamboo dwellings. The Caribs, fewer in number, inhabited the lesser Antilles and were the more aggressive of the two. Both Caribs and Arawaks engaged in agriculture, hunting and fishing. Their diet consisted of fish, turtles, iguanas, birds, and vegetables such as chili, cassava, maize and sweet potatoes.[3] It has been suggested that some of these foods are not indigenous to the region but were obtained from Africans with whom the Amerindians traded during the pre-Columbian era.[4]

As far as can be ascertained, Columbus was the first European to explore the region.[5] He landed in Cuba, the most northerly of the Greater Antilles, in 1492 and arrived in Trinidad, the most southerly of the Lesser Antilles, in 1498. He also reached the shores of Guyana in 1498. Shortly after Columbus' exploration of the Caribbean, Spanish settlements were established in the area. Most of the settlers came to the region with anticipation of immediate wealth, since it was believed that an abundant supply of gold could be found there, as had been obtained in Central and South America. But deposits of gold in the islands were minuscule, so many of the settlers went into farming, predominantly sugar cane, the bulk of which was exported to Europe. Settlers were ill-prepared for Caribbean farming, and when they found the work involved was unmanageable, they instituted the "Ecomienda System" in which bands of indigenous Amerindians were required to work for the white settlers. Even as early as 1513, however, a few Africans were captured and brought to the area to expand the labour force.

The native Amerindians were treated deplorably. Not only were they expected to spend long hours washing gold dust and doing farm labour, but they were brutally whipped and tortured to encourage discipline and work. Many who tried to escape were killed; others, engaged in especially strenuous labour, died of exhaustion. Still others became weak and died as a result of exposure to European diseases. The rate of extermination of the Amerindians was so rapid that by 1536 there were no Amerindians in Barbados, where the Spanish had landed just 18 years before. The Spanish arrived at St. Kitts in 1493 and by 1623 all Amerindians had died. In Jamaica, where the Spanish had landed in 1494, the rate of extermination was also high. By July 1611 there were 523 Spaniards, 107 free Blacks, 74 native Amerindians and 558 enslaved Africans.[6] As the Indian population dwindled, poor whites and convicts were brought from Europe as indentured servants. These labourers were contracted to work for a specified period, after which they were granted settler's status.[7] Africans, however, resisted their enslavement wherever and whenever possible. Many were successful in fleeing the plantations and settled in areas that offered safety from their captors, who were less skilful at the rough terrain.

European attempts to colonize Caribbean territories involved extensive rivalry between Spain, Great Britain, France and the Netherlands. Some territories experienced change of European control several times between the 16th and 19th centuries. Spain eventually was successful in maintaining control over Cuba until 1899, and Puerto Rico until 1898. The other Caribbean territories, however, were won by the French, Dutch or British. The British gained control over Guyana in 1796, Barbados in 1624, St. Kitts in 1783, Grenada in 1783, Dominica in 1805, Jamaica in 1655, Trinidad in 1802, and Tobago in 1814. Territorial transition from one ruling power to the next was apparently socially tumultuous. Slaves took advantage of this situation by fleeing plantations to join other runaways who lived in bands away from the European sites of settlement. These runaways were labelled Cimarrones by the Spanish, and Maroons by the British.[8] Examples of such runaways are the "Bush Negroes" of Surinam and the Maroons of Jamaica. European militia men were largely unsuccessful in recapturing members of these groups; therefore the respective Colonial governments signed treaties granting these Blacks their freedom and autonomy.[9]

During the 18th century, when the European economic structure changed to a capitalist system, European demand for sugar increased dramatically. This made it necessary to increase production on the Caribbean plantations. Indentured servants could not be inveigled to come to the Caribbean in sufficient numbers for the large labour force required to meet this increase, so the slave trade with Africa was stepped up. Thus slavery was motivated by purely economic, rather than racial, considerations. It was only after the institution of slavery was well developed that it became necessary to convince those earning their livelihood on this basis and . . . indeed the slaves themselves . . . that Africans (Blacks) and their descendants were inferior to their white owners.[10] Only by this philosophy could capturing people from their homeland, robbing them of their cultural heritage, and treating them like beasts of burden, be morally justified.

Significant Aspects of African Heritage

The vast majority of slaves brought to the Caribbean were from West Africa.[11] Among them were individuals from a broad social spectrum:

royalty, politicians, griots (oral historians, story-tellers), artisans, seers, witch-doctors, religious leaders and common folk. Slave traders from the various European countries had definite preferences concerning which African peoples would best suit their purposes. The British preferred the Akan people of Ghana and the Gold Coast, the vast majority of whom were Ashanti (Coromantes) and Fenti; the French preferred the Fon of Dahomey, Senegal and the Cameroons; the Spanish and Portuguese preferred the Yoruba (Nago) of Western Nigeria.[12] For this reason, in any study of African survivals among Blacks in the New World, certain differences can be observed between regions. For example, the proverbs, folktales, superstitions and music of Blacks in English-speaking countries tend to be of Ashanti derivation, while many gestures, hairstyles and dishes that are decidedly Yoruba can be identified among Blacks in the Spanish-speaking countries. An exception would be Trinidad and Tobago, where the Spanish influence continued until less than a decade before the British slave trade ended in 1807. Contemporary religious cults such as Santeria in Cuba, Cumina in Jamaica and Shango in Trinidad, display rituals reminiscent of West African religious rituals. Speech patterns of West African tribes also played an important role in shaping the dialects of Blacks in the different parts of the New World.[13] In spite of the differences mentioned above, many similarities in cultural patterns can be found among Blacks in the New World. Our discussion will therefore focus on the commonalities, and their significance in the evolution of West Indian cultures.

Herskovits (1941) developed the term "cultural focus", which describes those aspects of culture to which the highest emphasis is attributed and to which the greatest amount of a people's attention is given.[14] Most researchers who have studied the cultures of West Africa agree that the area of cultural focus for the West African is the spiritual realm; around this aspect of culture all others are centred.[15] The peoples of West Africa shared a world view that recognized an essential continuity between the spiritual and physical realms, such that what happened in one had an effect on the other. The spirit world was believed to be inhabited by a Supreme Being (known as Onayme among the Akan, Nana Buluku among the Fon, and Olodumare among the Yoruba); it was also inhabited by lesser dieties, and the spirits of departed ancestors. These spirits played a vital role in the daily affairs of a people. They were assumed to communicate with them by possessing individuals during religious ceremonies and using them as their medium of speech. An interplay was also recognized between the animate and inanimate in which things, animate and inanimate, were regarded as tools to be used or misused. Humans were answerable to God, and to the ancestors, for their stewardship of land, possessions and the community (Barrett, 1974).[16]

The spiritual and physical realms were conceptualized as being in balance. Africans attempted to maintain what they perceived as their correct position within the equilibrium between them. They believed that any threat to their being could alter their position in relation to the rest of the universe and upset its essential harmony. They therefore sought to reach peace with the gods and the departed ancestors through prayer and sacrifice, and with other people by attempting to offend no one and by using magic to counter any attacks from the physical realm.[17] Illness was regarded as an unnatural state, evidence that a spiritual or physical being was attempting to harm the individual. Other misfortunes were viewed in a similar light, and Africans would consult a special doctor who had been trained in dealing with both the symptoms of an attack (illness or misfortunes) and its cause (spiritual or physical). They would be helped to find ways of pacifying the being whom they had offended, or of nullifying the effects of these attacks, and in this way preserve their well-being and that of their tribe.

The tribe was composed of several clans which were residential groupings of individuals and families who shared a common ancestor.[18] Among the Akan descent was matrilineal, but among the Yoruba and the Fon it was patrilineal. The kinship system was fundamental to the tribe in structure and process. It gave individuals a sense of belonging and determined the social norms of the community. An important aspect of life within the tribe was the rites accompanying each stage of individuals' lives. Passage from one stage of life to the next was accompanied by specific rituals. These had to be observed and performed in accordance with the established rules of each particular tribe. These rituals had significant religious meaning. Each stage had its accompanying ritual further establishing an individual's membership and sense of belonging to the tribe. The most important of these rituals was the puberty rite. People were not considered adults unless they were properly initiated at puberty. This initiation had the specific purpose of educating the individual as to his or her adult responsibilities in marriage, procreation (which ensured the continuity of the tribe), family life, and social relationships within the entire tribe. An individual could not marry unless he or she had been formally initiated.*

Among the peoples of West Africa, marriage was (and in some areas continues to be) a polygynous institution in which a man is permitted to have as many wives as he can afford to support.[19] Generally, courtship would begin after a man chose a young female whom he wished to marry. He would approach her parents requesting permission for their daughter to become his future wife. The parents would question friends of the man to determine if he, or any of his relatives, had at any time been mentally ill, in debt, or engaged in criminal activity. It was also important to ascertain that the man and their daughter did not belong to the same clan as in-clan marriage was deemed incest, punishable by death. The incest taboo extended far beyond the immediate family to relatives many times removed. For these reasons, even an initiated woman could not become betrothed without the approval of her parents.[20] If all conditions were favourable, then the parents would grant permission for the man to marry their daughter and they would be betrothed. At this time the man would be required to give her parents a gift to seal the agreement. In some tribes the betrothal marked the beginning of courtship, after which the girl would have the status of "yere akoda" (infant wife) among the Akan, and "iyawo mi ona" (junior wife of the road) among the Yoruba.[21] Courtship continued until the girl attained puberty. Throughout courtship the man continued giving gifts to his future wife and her parents. This was known as the brideprice or bridewealth. Through the giving of this bridewealth, the man was not "buying" his wife, as is so often mistakenly believed by non-Africans, but demonstrating that his intentions towards her were serious. It also insured that the man would not mistreat the woman once he married her, that the woman would remain faithful to her husband and would establish him as the legal father of her children.[22]

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*For a detailed discussion of tribal customs in Africa see John S. Mbiti "African Religions and Philosophies" 1970.

When the young female attained puberty, her husband-to-be was notified immediately. This was an event of great significance and a time for rejoicing as at any time thereafter, as long as the bride-price had been paid in full and the girl had been initiated, they could be married. The couple would be joined together in a simple ceremony which represented a union not merely between two individuals, but more importantly, an alliance between two clans. After the ceremony the couple lived together as man and wife.

Husband and wife did not consummate their relationship until after marriage. If at this time it was discovered that a woman was not a virgin, her husband would be able to divorce her. If he did, her parents would be required to return the brideprice in its entirety.[23] If, however, he decided not to have the marital union dissolved, she would continue to be his wife but she would be an object of derision, disgraced before the entire village. Adultery, which was an offence committable only by a married woman, was also grounds for divorce. Her sexual partner would be required to repay the husband an amount equivalent to the brideprice and to reimburse him for all that he had spent on her during both courtship and marriage. Thereafter, the woman's sexual partner would be free to marry her.[24] In contrast, a married man could enter into subsequent marital unions only with the permission of his wife or wives. If this permission was not granted, the man could, however, keep the woman he wanted to marry as his mistress.[25]

A man lived on a compound with all his wives and, among the Fon and the Yoruba, each wife together with her children had their own dwelling place. The man spent some time with each mother and child unit. The wives of a man formed a supportive unit, visiting each other and co-operating in the performance of domestic and social activities. When a wife conceived, the man ceased his visits with her until the baby was weaned.[26]

This family arrangement was not an "uncivilized" practice, but had specific value in the African context. A man's wealth was estimated by the amount of land he owned. Farming and maintaining large amounts of land required more work than he was capable of doing alone. Much of this work-power was provided by his wives and children, who co-operated in the farming. As important as this was, it still was not the major factor that made it necessary for a man to have more than one wife. Instead it was the great importance that was placed on procreation that made polygyny an essential aspect of African societies.

> "The man needed more than one woman to help in the upkeep of the property, but women were not used like beasts; they were not dehumanized. Furthermore, it should be noted that polygamy (polygyny) is being practiced less and less by the Africans, especially since the society, thanks to the introduction of "modern" ways of life, has been made to almost reject its human emphasis in preference for the less human, "civilized" alternative. What makes the outrage expressed by the Western man especially incomprehensible to the African is that, the so-called civilized society is itself not aware of "strange" marital practices going on within its borders. While the African officially marries more than one wife, the Westerner enjoys the same privilege — if that, indeed, is the correct word — unofficially." (Ojo-Ade, 1976)[27]

Because of this arrangement, children became particularly close to their mothers, since their father's attention and affection had to be shared with other mother-child units. Thus the bond between mother and child became very strong.[28]

When Africans were brought to the New World, they were uprooted from rich cultural heritages in which the spiritual realm was the area of cultural focus. The extensive kinship systems, with their clearly defined social norms, assured individuals of security and maintained the cohesiveness and stability of these societies.

Slavery

The literature on the institution of slavery is replete with accounts of the deplorable conditions under which Africans were captured and transported across the Atlantic. The inhumane conditions of the voyage, and the tortures inflicted, resulted in many deaths, several of which were suicides. This was only the beginning of the brutality and trauma, which was to continue with even greater severity on the plantations. On arrival in the New World, Africans were auctioned, given new names and sometimes branded. Being auctioned and branded is indeed physically and psychologically painful, but how much more painful and destructive must it be to be robbed of one's name, a crucial component of identity, with its significant religious, family and tribal meanings.

> "They baptized . . . . frequently with derogatory names as part of a general brainwashing program which deeply burned in a sense of inferiority. Thus, a Legba or Olorum from a proud African nation was renamed Napoleon, St. Peter, Vanilla or Bituminous. Sometimes he was even named after mules on the plantation: Blaze, Dragon or Lightfoot."[29]

All this, of course, was being carried out in the name of Christianity. The Europeans' task was to "Christianize" the "heathen African savage", whose subsequent existence encompassed a process of "deprogramming" designed to establish their masters' total domination.

The approach taken here to the slavery experience is similar to that taken by scholars who have analyzed the psycho-social effects of "total institutions" on their inmates. Plantations were like such institutions in that individuals were removed from their home environment and kept as captive labour. The following definition elaborates on the similarities.

> "A total institution may be defined as a place of residence and work (the plantation) where large numbers of like situated individuals, (enslaved Africans) cut off from the wider society (cut off from Africa) for an appreciable period of time, (hundreds of years) together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life . . . . What is prison-like about prisons is found in institutions whose members have broken no laws."[30]

Slaves lived in plantation huts provided for them; they were issued clothing and assigned provision grounds* from which they were expected to feed themselves. Even though these arrangements allowed slaves some degree of freedom in keeping their "own home" and in

*Provision grounds were small plots of land where slaves cultivated their own food.

providing their own food they were none the less captive for life. Although there were no barred windows and doors, no high walls nor fences, escaping back to Africa was not feasible. They recognized that the ocean was a barrier they had no means of crossing. If they fled the plantation they were tracked down by militia men in much the same manner as an escaped prisoner is. If caught they faced severe consequences, possible mutilation or some other torture. What was to become of these human beings in this "total institution"? We and others contend that the brutality of plantation life and the necessary adjustments to it were a gross interruption in African cultural patterns, and laid the foundation for the culture that was to evolve once slavery came to an end.

> "The recruit comes into the establishment with a conception of himself made possible by certain stable social arrangements in his home world. Upon entrance, he is immediately stripped of the support provided by these arrangements. In the accurate language of some of our oldest total institutions, he begins a series of abasements, degradations, humiliations and profanations of self. His self is systematically, if often unintentionally, mortified. He begins some radical shifts in his moral career, a career composed of the progressive changes that occur in the beliefs that he has concerning himself and significant others."[31]

Every effort was made to degrade and humiliate Africans on the plantations. The newly-arrived slave had to be "seasoned" (taught) to the ways of the plantation system. This process was intended to rob the slaves of their identity and render them loyal and obedient as well as dependant on their oppressors. In the early days of slavery this "seasoning" was performed by overseers, later by older "seasoned" slaves deemed to be trustworthy. The period of seasoning, which lasted an average of a year, was also responsible for many deaths among Africans who were already weakened by the voyage from Africa.[32]

European overseers and masters, in an attempt to maintain their domination over their captives, treated them as inferior beings, ridiculing their physical features (colour, hair, nose and lips) and cultural practices. Slaves were forbidden the use of their native languages and were forced to speak a broken version of the oppressors' language, to accept the whites' values and even their negative perceptions of all that was African. This "acceptance" helped to ensure survival, since defiance provoked dangerous reprisals. This is not to suggest that slaves did not protest their inhumane treatment (forms of protest will be discussed later) but rather that their behaviour was an attempt to escape brutal punishment and ensure a greater chance for survival. Their treatment was a process of behaviour modification which, over generations, resulted in their acceptance and an internalization of the oppressors' values.[33]

> “. . . . The goal was to convince all that Africa had no history and no culture or, that if she ever had any, it was made up of a potpourri of horrifying elements which the African would do best to forget. Colonization went hand in hand with civilization and Christianity. A new set of antonyms was established:
>
> Civilization — savagery
> Christianity — paganism
> Culture — barbarism
> Europe — Africa
> Reason — instinct
> Complex — simple
>
> . . . . The West Indian was brainwashed into believing himself superior to the African “savage. . . .”[34]

This brainwashing, however, was simply a ploy by which the oppressors justified their brutal actions, since African slaves and their descendants were perceived and treated as inferior beings devoid of “human” characteristics.

Patterson (1967) cautions his readers against making assumptions that slaves internalized the colour ideals of the coloured group (those of mixed parentage). He asserts that the data, on the contrary, seems to suggest that Blacks rejected the colour ideals of Whites and Coloureds. They were biased toward their race, feeling little sense of inferiority when discriminated against by Whites and Coloureds. He stresses the fact that colour was of psychological significance only to the Coloureds and even though this phenomenon was objectively disadvantageous to Blacks it was subjectively meaningless to them.[35] That there was ongoing resistance to enslavement and that slaves had many psychic defences against emotional abuse has been amply documented. If, however, we accept the precepts of either cognitive dissonance or role theory, it is difficult to conceive of people living for years under such conditions without some degree of internalization. This refers particularly to the Creole slave (those born on the plantations). Those who resisted successfully either fled the plantations or had perished. It is difficult to say how much and at what point internalization took place, since data on the subject is not available. We concur with Brathwaite who questions the possibility of the existence of slavery in a situation where slaves, particularly those born on the plantation, had not somehow agreed to play their assigned roles in the system.[36] We now know that the aftermath of this situation led to the Marcus Garvey movement in the 1920s and the Black Power movement of the 1960s, both of which were directed at awakening pride in the African heritage of New World Blacks. Had this pride not been damaged, there would have been no need for these movements.

Africans were brought into the hostility of the plantation system and forced to labour under conditions in which every effort was made to rob them of their cultural identity, their feelings of self-worth, their very humanity, and to render them totally dependent on their oppressors for survival.

Slavery, as it was practised in the English colonies of the Caribbean and other parts of the New World, was without doubt among the most hideous and most barbaric forms of oppression known. Under the British slave system, human beings were, in effect, stripped of their humanity, for, unlike the slaves under the "Latin" system, they had no legal rights whatsoever.[37] They were in every respect merely property of their masters, required to be totally loyal and obedient to them. Disobedience brought whippings, torture and sometimes even death. A slavemaster who killed or physically injured one of his slaves could not be prosecuted as he was free to do with *his property* whatever he wished. Slaves had no right to defend themselves against the attacks of the slavemaster; resistance to these attacks brought severe consequences.[38] The Latin system at least recognized the slave as a human being with certain God-given rights. Most scholars agree that the Latin system was less severe than that of the English. Nevertheless there was also harshness in the Latin system. A severity continuum within the latter would show the French to be harshest, the Portuguese in the middle and the Spanish the most lenient.[39] Under the Spanish system any slavemaster who killed or physically harmed a slave could be prosecuted. A slavemaster could not deprive slaves of the rights of marriage or parenthood. By contrast there were no such legal provisions made for marriage among slaves in the British colonies, as this was seen as depriving the slavemaster of his right to control *his property*. Furthermore, in Jamaica, for example, it was illegal for slaves to marry prior to 1816 . . . a mere 18 years prior to the British decree that slavery be abolished. There also, the paternity of a slave was not legally recognized in any form. Legally, slaves had mothers but no fathers.[40] We can see, then, that the Spanish laws laid a foundation for a slave system that was radically different from that of the British.

In spite of the legal provisions under the Spanish system, however, marriage as a Christian rite was rarely practised among the slaves because its permanence and accompanying rights created too many inconveniences for slavemasters. Therefore marriage ceremonies, which were without legal sanction, were often performed by the slavemaster.[41] This is not to imply that stable conjugal unions did not exist as (in Cuba, for example) there were such unions among slaves.[42] The lack of legal provisions for slaves' marriage in the British colonies, and the fact that provisions for marriage under the Latin system were not strictly adhered to, made it possible for slavemasters to break up family units that might otherwise have been stable. Furthermore, the types of mating patterns that evolved were devoid of the moral sanctions that existed back in Africa.[43] It is not difficult to imagine a situation in which men outnumbered women by far. Those males who were highly skilled, and who were from time to time hired to other plantations for specialized jobs, earned enough money to attract females. Hence there was much competition between males in pursuit of a mate. These "wealthier" males very often had more than one mate, creating an even greater shortage. European men also sought their sexual partners from among the slaves, since there was an extreme shortage of European women.[44]

Slaves with their insight and wisdom accurately summed up their situation in the animal stories where the victimizers are themselves victimized. The Europeans held the Africans captive but in so doing they also held themselves captive. Slaves had nothing to lose since many preferred death to their wretched existence. Europeans on the other hand had everything to lose — their investments and possibly their lives. Hence they expended much time, money and energy in protecting their property (slaves and estate) and their lives from destruction at the hands of their captives, whom they feared greatly.

> "The discrepancy between the slavemaster's authority and his circumstances was for him a source of aggravation and shame. He found himself dependent on his slaves at every point—for livelihood, for safety, for comfort, even for companionship."[45]

The irony of this situation must have been indeed painful for the European.

A large number of plantations were managed by personnel appointed by land-owners who remained in Europe and visited their Caribbean estates only occasionally. The European population in the Caribbean, during the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries consisted mainly of the above employees, militia men, poorer land owners who managed their own estates, indentured servants, and government officials charged with tending the interests of the mother country.[46] Many of these Europeans were of lower socio-economic status in the Caribbean with the sole interest of quickly acquiring money and returning to Europe. The colonies and its slaves were merely commodities to be exploited to the highest degree and, as such, European social institutions fared no better than those of the Africans. Both groups were "trapped" in an alien environment where African as well as European institutions ceased to function and moral codes seemed suspended. Behaviour was determined by the circumstances in this milieu. The immorality inherent in the enslavement of one group by another could not but give rise to further immorality, particularly in the British colonies where a laissez-faire attitude was allowed to go unencumbered by intervention from Great Britain. Whatever practices were profitable for the entrepreneurs met with approval, regardless of how brutal and destructive they were for the slave population. Africans unable to maintain their traditional family patterns imitated their oppressors whose behaviour left much to be desired.[47]

One of the harshest realities of slavery was the sexual exploitation of female slaves by their masters and overseers. Since there was a shortage of European women in the Caribbean, European men forced female slaves they "fancied" to become their sexual partners. Those who attempted to resist were raped or otherwise physically brutalized. The African male had no right to defend a woman, even if she was his mate. These practices were much more common in the British colonies than in the Latin.[48] A slavemaster who developed a particular liking for a female slave would keep her as his concubine.

Concubines and their children, as well as children produced as a result of rape or from casual unions with other slave women, often escaped some of the harsher realities of slavery. These Mulatto* children were fed and clothed more adequately than pure Africans and generally worked as house servants instead of in the fields. Many of these offspring were given the opportunity to learn trades or to receive an education locally or in Europe. The presence of these children was a source of embarrassment to some European men, however, particularly if they were later joined by European wives. In such cases, their Mulatto children did not receive preferential treatment and, in some instances, were sold to other plantation owners.[49] The fact that slaves, and more importantly the slavemaster's child, could be sold at any time no doubt added to the daily burden of tensions in the life of the slaves, and to their feelings of insecurity.

Procreation was a most important aspect of tribal life in Africa. This, too, was disrupted in the plantation system. There are many points of view as to the reason for the low birthrate among Africans in most Caribbean territories during slavery. Some scholars suggest that African women deliberately aborted themselves or neglected newborn infants as a form of passive resistance to the system. Others suggest that the great demand for women, particularly Creoles, in the immoral climate that prevailed, deterred women from bearing children — a process that would have rendered them less attractive as sexual partners. Yet others have blamed strenuous labour and the extreme brutality in Caribbean slavery for abortions, while infant deaths have been blamed on poor nutrition and unsanitary conditions.

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*Mulatto offspring, because of their mixed parentage, were of lighter complexion and had physical features that were a mixture of African and European. They were neither "pure" Black nor "pure" White.

We subscribe to all three explanations. The first two apply to Creoles but the second applies specifically to Mulattoes who were perceived as more desirable and were heavily involved in prostitution.[50] The third explanation would apply to African women to whom child bearing was a highly valued function. It is not likely that such an important value would have disappeared in one generation, but in such a hostile environment, bearing and rearing children was almost impossible.

> " . . . but West Indian slave conditions were appalling. Conditions of work, nourishment, confinement, and punishment were probably the worst in the New World. The paucity of Whites made repression of rebellion more savage than in Brazil or the American south. The West Indian slave regimes generally became more severe as the ratio of Negro to White increased. Caribbean sugar plantations rapidly used up slaves and continually imported fresh ones. Americans encouraged slaves to bear and raise children; West Indian planters considered slave-bearing unrealistically humanitarian. Purchases, unlike births, supplied labour where wanted and without delay. . . . when slaves were emancipated, the Caribbean contained scarcely one-third the number imported; the United States had eleven times the number brought in."[51]

Where children survived, their lot was also trauma and brutality. They too were "the property" of the slavemaster; however, they remained with their mothers until assessed capable of labour — age 5 or 6. At this time children were assigned to drivers* who had the responsibility of assuring the development of "appropriate slave behaviour." This they accomplished with techniques that were oftentimes quite harsh.[52] As the property of the slavemaster, these children could be sold by the time they attained adolescence. Younger children and their mothers were generally sold together with no consideration given to the child's father or mother's male partner, if she had one.[53]

Many slavemasters freed some of their Mulatto children but, for other slaves, gaining freedom was a difficult and usually impossible goal. Acts of bravery, faithful service, or testifying against a rebellious slave, often resulted in freedom.[54] Those who were skilled tradesmen earned money with which they could purchase their freedom. This purchasing of freedom was known as manumission and was encouraged by the French and Spanish, but British slavemasters did everything possible to prevent their slaves taking advantage of this system.[55] Freed Mulattoes were called "free coloured" by the British and "gentes de color" by the Spanish. Because of the privileges conferred upon them by the slavemasters, the freed Mulattoes formed the nucleus of a privileged class in the Black population. The association of privileges with complexion of skin established a link between social class and colour early in the history of West Indian society.

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*These drivers were elderly slave women no longer capable of strenuous work but deemed trustworthy in fulfiling the master's wishes to make "good slaves" of the children.

Most freed Blacks worked at the trades they had acquired as slaves. Others (including Mulattoes) were employed as clerks, teachers, artisans and bookkeepers. Some had inherited property from their white fathers, were planters, and owned slaves themselves.[56] "Free coloured" did not, however, have all the privileges of the white population. For example, under the British system they were not permitted to testify in court against a white person, and they could not vote or serve as representatives in the Assembly.[57]

The practices that were most conducive to profit for the slavemasters destroyed traditional family patterns and other meaningful institutions of the African people. As victims in a system devoid of moral sanctions, the slave must have made something akin to, in Goffman's words,

> ". . . some radical shifts in his *moral career,* a career composed of the progressive changes that occur in the beliefs that he has concerning himself and significant others."[58]

How did the women perceive their men? No longer were they landowners who could proudly claim women for wives whom they could "afford" to support. How did the men perceive themselves, no longer the proud head of their households and not even allowed to protect their women from abuse. How did the men perceive their women? How did the women perceive themselves? These questions can be answered only speculatively, but we do know that the effect of slavery on the Black family has been profound and long lasting. It is this historical situation that laid the foundation for the kinds of familial structures, processes, values and behaviours that evolved in the British colonies after emancipation.

Slavemasters' treatment of their Mulatto children resulted in a divisive situation within the Black population* and contributed to further psychological trauma. This laid the foundation for attitudes and behaviour that continue to be a hindrance to the development of social cohesion among Blacks who evolved out of the oppression of slavery. Preferential treatment accorded to "free coloureds" further reinforced negation of African attributes, as well as the "need" to imitate the European slavemaster. This was motivated by slaves' attempts to escape punishment and ensure survival.

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*Even though "free coloureds" were perceived and treated differently from pure Africans, the authors include this group when referring to the Black population.

"Free coloureds", by virtue of education and inheritance of property from their European fathers, enjoyed privileges not available to the larger Black population. This established the very important link between privileges and shade of skin, thereby comprising the beginning of a pre-industrial class system based on complexion. This system is one of the vehicles that unfortunately even today has perpetuated the divisiveness in the Black population.[59] At the abolition of slavery, the "privileged" possessed resources that enabled them to manipulate their social environment to their advantage. They were able to afford their children's costly education, thus assuring continued escape from drudgery and poverty, which became the lot of most Blacks.

This privileged mulatto class was seen by "pure" Blacks as a new oppressor, resulting in an antagonism between the classes, which continues to exist. Even some Blacks who were successful in acquiring property and an education, which allowed for upward mobility, became oppressive in their attitudes and behaviour towards the less fortunate Blacks. Many privileged, as well as under-privileged, had been exposed to scanty and distorted versions of historical events, so did not gain a real understanding of the systems and forces that shaped the milieu in which they were all victims. The socio-political stresses inevitable in this societal milieu gave rise to individual and collective frustration and hostility. Unable to vent these on the true source of oppression, the victims resorted to scapegoating each other, and indeed continue to do so.

Slaves were "promised" the coveted freedom as a reward for testifying against each other on acts of defiance; this contributed to further divisiveness and instilled feelings of mistrust within the Black population. This phenomenon has been more recently documented in Bettleheim's 1973 psychological analysis and discussion of mass oppression in Nazi prison camps. Similar findings have been documented in other studies conducted among prison inmates. Many scholars, observing this phenomenon among Blacks in the New World, attributed its existence to the fact that slaves were captured from different tribes in Africa, some of which have a mutual history of war. The authors partly agree with this, but there are other crucial factors that merit at least as much consideration in analyzing this phenomenon. The oppression that was slavery, and those various tactics employed by slavemasters in their aim of total domination, forced slaves into internalizing an attitude of mistrusting each other as yet another survival mechanism. Lipsky's article on "internalized oppression" addresses the issue of lack of trust among Blacks and its nexus between the experience of slavery, continued oppression of Blacks, and the present-day lack of Black cohesiveness.

While slavery destroyed most of the African traditions, Africans did protest the dehumanizing process to which they were subjected. Their determination to maintain their humanity and their dignity gave them the strength to protest even with the knowledge of severe consequences. They fled the plantations into the hills, returning at night to set others free and to destroy property. Suicides and self-mutilation also occurred, as well as sabotage of plantation equipment, working very slowly, and feigning illness or lack of understanding;[60] all of these practices were perceived by the slavemasters as stupidity and laziness. The implicit assumption was that slaves should have been grateful for being "Christianized".

> " . . . these men and women were determined in their efforts to preserve their human dignity and even though they risked being brutally murdered they would congregate to perform religious ceremonies and to pass on their knowledge as had been done in Africa . . . the story of the oppression of Africans in slavery is one of which we need not be ashamed when the courage of our ancestors is considered."[61]

Survival of African Culture

Thus far we have outlined the traumas experienced by Africans, the adjustments they made in their attempts to survive their brutal existence, and how these adjustments damaged African individuals as well as the all-important traditional family patterns. Now we turn to those aspects of African culture that were of the greatest survival value for the African and that continue to be of significance to Blacks in the New World.

Most scholars agree that the slaves' religious beliefs gave them hope and increased their chances for survival. Their belief in a hereafter, and their conviction that in death they would be reunited with their tribes back in Africa, made their existence seem less intolerable.[62]

> " . . . Indians died at an alarming rate, and the reason for such a high death rate cannot be wholly laid upon disease or murder by the whites. A major reason for the high death rate was despair and hopelessness, for the Indians, although they had a highly developed religion based upon Nature, did not have the strong, all-pervasive belief in the supernatural that the Black slaves did. They were unable to find a meaning to their lives that was higher than their earthly existence. In the face of the white man's gods, theirs went away."[63]

It is ironic that the enslavement of Africans was intended "for their *good*, to save them from their *uncivilized, heathen existence* in Africa". Europeans were unwilling to perceive Africans as humans with a well defined and highly complex culture, so failed to recognize the depth, beauty and meaning of African religious philosophies. Africans were deemed to be in need of instruction in the Christian doctrine. Yet, in the vast majority of British colonies, slaves were denied religious instruction.[64] Efforts of missionaries met with very little success since slavemasters would not allow slaves the time to receive these instructions. Furthermore, the directives given to the missionaries by the Church of England were contradictory and hypocritical.[65]

In the early days of slavery, Africans were permitted to congregate and perform their traditional religious rituals, so long as this did not interfere with production on the plantations. Slavemasters soon discovered, however, that rebellions were planned at these gatherings, and the drummer at such meetings transmitted messages concerning uprisings, messages that travelled for miles. Hence congregating was prohibited. But this did not deter the slaves; they secretly congregated for religious practices. Since slaves came from different nations in Africa, there was a variety of religious philosophies among them. In this situation slaves adhered to the philosophy that was predominant among them. In the Latin colonies, particularly in Cuba, slaves were allowed more freedom in preserving their African customs. The Roman Catholic Church in the Spanish Colonies paid greater attention to the religious life of the slave, than did the Church of England in the British Colonies, but conversion to Christianity was not accomplished. Syncreticism of African religion and Christianity was the result of these efforts to convert Africans, and Santeria emerged where the Yoruban pantheon gained supremacy over the Christian pantheon.[66] Religious rituals that are decidedly African may also be observed in the Voodoo ceremonies of Haita and Shango of Trinidad (where the Spanish influence lasted well into the 19th century).

The suppression of traditional African religious rituals in the Protestant Caribbean colonies resulted in the development of secret cults and witchcraft.[67] By the mid-18th century, when Great Britain brought pressure to bear on slavemasters with regard to the religious life of the slaves, these cults were well established and the practice of witchcraft was widespread. Slaves could, therefore, readily resist missionaries' efforts at converting them. Where slaves appeared to be converted, this was only on the surface, or they had incorporated some aspects of their masters' religion into their own.

The two denominations that were attractive to the slaves were Roman Catholicism, whose saints were reminiscent of the many gods back in Africa, and Baptist, reminiscent of the powerful river spirits. Adopting the gods of another religion was also an African survival technique. Back in Africa a captured people adopted the gods of their captors, perceiving these as more powerful than their own.[68]

These developments led to the emergence of a wide variety of religions among Blacks in the New World, and the disappearance of the original basic religious philosophies that otherwise could have been a vehicle for cohesiveness among Blacks. Nevertheless, religion continues to be a most important aspect of life among New World Blacks.

Witchcraft. Magic, Obeah

In Africa, the sorcerer was one of several religious functionaries, and was greatly feared. Whenever there was confusion and disequilibrium in the society, this was blamed on witchcraft. The people attributed responsibility for social problems to sorcerers, who sometimes were killed or banished from the community. The discovery and exorcism of the effects of witchcraft were conducted in specific rituals led by another religious functionary, the "Myal-Man". The myal-man had great knowledge in the use of herbs for curative purposes; this was the opposite of the sorcerer, or obeahman, who used herbal poisons, charms and fetishes for harm.[69]

Witchcraft is usually carried out in secret; therefore it was difficult for masters and overseers to detect and discourage its practice. Hence, it is readily understood how witchcraft became widespread, particularly in the British colonies where restrictions on Blacks' religious practices were most severe.

The experience of slavery, to the African, must have seemed like powerful sorcery on the part of the white man. Even priests and priestesses were at the mercy of this powerful magic, since they were unable to perform their traditional functions. This, however, was the ideal environment for the African sorcerer. Priests [illegible] priestesses, with their knowledge of sorcery, joined forces with the sorcerers to fight the common enemy. They were greatly feared by slaves and masters.[70]

The magical practices of these functionaries were resorted to in cases of illness, for protection against evil forces, for the perpetration of evil against the enemy, and for courage. Obeah and other forms of magic gave slaves a sense of power and control over their lives, and increased courage to cope with their wretched existence. The many successful rebellions in Haiti and Jamaica were preceded by frenzied cult rituals and led by the leaders of these cults. Legitimate priests of the hoodoo cult, in Haiti, and the Cunina (derived from myalism), in Jamaica, were apparently also consulted prior to engaging in rebellion.[71]

Although many West Indians deny their existence today, these magical practices still play an important role in the lives of many, particularly those who are still severely oppressed.[72]

Folklore

Belief in the supernatural was not the only aspect of African culture that proved to be a valuable survival mechanism. There was also African folklore, transmitted orally from one generation to the next, which played a vital role in the struggle to survive culturally. Traditional folklore helped to keep aspects of African mythology alive. But more importantly, these tales (as well as those that emerged in the new environment) were a safe outlet for frustration and aggression and a means of expressing protest. At times the wit and humour of the tales were directed at the slaves themselves and their wretched existence; however, it was more often the slaves' subtle way of ridiculing their masters. Most of these tales concerned animals, and the generic theme was one in which smaller animals transcended their state to escape attacks of larger animals by outwitting them.[73] As fantasies, with the obvious analogy of smaller animals representing the slaves and the larger beasts the masters, slaves derived a vicarious feeling of power and freedom. When the moral of these stories was put into practice it meant temporary escape from misery. Unfortunately, this African survival mechanism, which helped slaves cope with their deplorable existence, has been used to stereotype Blacks negatively. Schecter's (1970) analysis of the origins of Black humour presents the interpretations of racist and non-racist scholars' discussions on the topic. The racist failed to recognize the cultural roots inherent in the animal stories, perceiving deceit and wit as innate Black characteristics. The non-racist, in contrast, systematically traced Br'er Rabbit (and like tales) to ones orally imported from Ghana's Akban tribe.[74]

Despite the negative perceptions of these African survivals by some whites (as well as some Blacks) there are many Blacks who continue to adhere to them. They were preserved because of their beauty and for their survival value in coping with oppression. Since many Blacks have remained oppressed — in post-slavery forms — the tales have continued to be meaningful allegories. These survivals are also a testimony to the richness of the African cultures from which New World Blacks were uprooted. The spontaneous expression of wit, wisdom and hope in spirituals, work songs, calypsoes, folklore and proverbs among contemporary Blacks thus can be seen to have their roots in African cultures.

Abolition of Slavery

Toward the end of the 18th century many violent uprisings were effected by slaves to protest their plight. Subtle passive tactics of resistance escalated into open rebellions. Blacks, both slave and free, (including Mulattoes) protested the position of inferiority to which they had been assigned. Freed Blacks agitated to be given all rights that the white population enjoyed, and for slaves to be freed. Haiti and Jamaica experienced the most violent of these rebellions; the famous Haitian Maroon Rebellion of 1791 brought about the freedom of Haitian slaves and independence from France in 1804.

News of these rebellions spread throughout the slave colonies, and every slavemaster lived in fear. By the end of the 18th century many landholders and their families had fled the Caribbean to return to their countries of origin. During this period, efforts to end slavery increased in Britain. The returning landholders organized to fight abolitionist efforts in the hope of protecting their Caribbean investments, but others pressed for emancipation. It was rivalry between capitalist interests and the cost of slave rebellions that actually brought the British slave trade to an end in 1807, and in 1834 concluded in the abolition of slavery throughout the British empire.[75]

The Post-Slavery Era

With emancipation many slaves left the plantation. Property managers who had been appointed by absentee landholders found themselves short of labourers. This shortage was alleviated by the importation of indentured servants from the East Indian colony; many had been tricked into contracting for the Caribbean through false promises.[76] Between 1833 and 1917, 145,000 East Indians were brought into Trinidad, 238,000 into Guyana (British Guiana), and lesser numbers were dispersed to other Caribbean territories. East Indians in the plantation system were also subjected to very inhumane treatment. Many died; some deserted the plantations; others returned to India at the end of their indenture, but a large number remained in the Caribbean. As Case (1976) has stated " . . . there is a common bond of suffering and humiliation that Africans and East Indians of the Caribbean share, even though they prefer at times to deny this."[77]

Unlike Africans, the East Indians had the promise of eventual freedom at the end of the term of indenture. They were not chattel but a tool for intensive time-limited exploitation. As such their plantation experience was less psychologically damaging than it had been for the

Africans. Experientially the differences between East Indians and Africans can be compared to those differences between short-term and long-term incarceration of inmates.[78] Furthermore there was no concerted effort to brainwash the East Indian labourers into believing themselves inferior to Europeans in physical appearance or cultural heritage. Although the caste system, so vital to the social structure in India, broke down under the plantation system, significant aspects of Indian culture were maintained through religion.[79]

Today where East Indians are the largest minority group, such as in Trinidad and Guyana, the Hindu and Muslim religions serve as a unifying force in maintaining their ethnic solidarity. This solidarity affords East Indians in Trinidad and Guyana significant socio-political advantages. This is unlike the situation in the current Black population, plagued by divisive factors of shade consciousness, class rivalries and a multiplicity of religious doctrines. Where East Indians are a small minority, their traditional religions have generally been replaced by Christian denominations, but they strive to maintain separateness from Creoles, taking great pride in their East Indian heritage. In Trinidad, Guyana and Surinam, where East Indians are a significant one-third to one-half of the population, they manifest a viable culture and community, competing with creoles for power and status. Due to their high birthrate, political dominance is a distinct possibility in these territories. By contrast, East Indians in Jamaica, Martinique, Guadeloupe and the Windward Islands make up only two to four per cent of the population. Hence they do not challenge the position of the higher status creole but are, by and large, subjects of the rural lower class. They do not adhere to the distinctive religious tradition, family structure and material culture that East Indians in Trinidad and the Guyanas maintain, but they do display many of the same separatist features. Pride in what they view as "Indianners", a reciprocated hostility towards Blacks, and ethnic endogamy are some of these features.[80]

In the mid-19th century, Chinese males were brought to the Caribbean, also as indentured labourers. Between the 1850s and 1860s, 9,000 Chinese were recruited for Jamaica, Trinidad, the French Antilles, British Guiana and Surinam.[81] The loneliness and drudgery of plantation work proved too much for them, as it had for others, and many died or found their way to the villages and towns, where they became shopkeepers. Since this Chinese venture proved extremely expensive for the landholders, most territories ceased recruitment of Chinese labourers.

Later in the same century, however, Trinidad and British Guiana became extremely short of labour, so resorted to recruiting Chinese families and acquired another 9,000 labourers.[82] This was more successful because these families (who were, by and large, farmers) remained on the land as tenants at the end of their indenture. Additional

Chinese voluntarily came to the Caribbean as merchants and craftspeople during the same period. These Chinese, as well as those who later gave up on farming, eventually came to dominate retail trade in the territories where they settled.

The fact that Chinese migrated as families and that their treatment, like the Indians, was also different from the Africans, enabled them to maintain much of their traditional institutions and stable family structures. There reportedly has been some degree of assimilation but, by and large, they remain endogamous and adhere to Chinese cultural forms.

Other minority groups of significance in the Caribbean are Portuguese and Jews. Portuguese were brought from Madeira to the Caribbean as indentured labourers in the early 19th century. Following emancipation of Blacks, there was an attempt to replace African slaves with Portuguese labourers in Surinam, British Guiana, Trinidad, Martinique and Guadeloupe. British Guiana received the largest number of Portuguese but plantation conditions forced some to return to Madeira. Large numbers of those who remained perished from disease and the harsh conditions of plantation labour. Planters became dissatisfied with Portuguese labourers and resorted to the importation of indentured labourers from India and China. Portuguese survivors soon left the plantations to engage in peddling and in small entrepreneur retail sales. They were not accepted as white by either the elite European or Creole whites, since they were not of continental European business class but Mediterraneans who had come to the Caribbean as indentured labourers. They were, however, encouraged by these elites in their business ventures.[83]

Porguguese, by virtue of their skin colour, were given preferential treatment and were extended credit from elite Europeans and white Creoles. In the mid-19th century when East Indians and Chinese were coming to meet estate needs, Madeirans were actually encouraged to migrate to the Caribbean as business people with no requirements for indentures or agricultural contracts. This allowed them to prosper, not just sooner, but also more easily, than East Indians, Chinese and Blacks.[84]

Since they migrated as families and received support from Caribbean elites, Portuguese were able to establish stable, viable communities. Having been excluded from elite circles despite their prosperity, and perceiving themselves as superior to Blacks, Indians and Chinese, they have retained cultural solidarity. Notwithstanding, this situation has given rise to many conflicts between the various ethnic groups in Guyana. In Trinidad, Curacao, Grenada and Jamaica (where they are smaller minorities) Portuguese have experienced less discrimination to the point where they have filtered into elite circles.[8]

Jews settled throughout the Caribbean as entrepreneurs as early as the 17th century. In these early days Jews experienced much discrimination but in later years, when other white population groups began to dwindle, Jews attained positions of prominence. Like the Portuguese, they came to be dominant in commerce, maintaining their cultural integrity. In recent years their numbers have dwindled in the Caribbean but wherever they are found they are influential in business, civil service and professional sectors.[86]

Near the end of the 19th century, merchants from the Middle East, as well as a small number from India, migrated to the Caribbean. Although the former were from a variety of Middle Eastern countries (particularly Lebanon and Palestine) they were all called "Syrians" in the Caribbean. These merchants also prospered and attained elite status, thereby incurring the hostility of the majority group — economically oppressed Blacks — ironically as "prosperous alien minorities". Unlike the Chinese and the Jews, these "Syrians" became highly assimilated into the mainstream of West Indian life and many married into other ethnic groups.[87]

The Caribbean colonies, therefore, became multi-ethnic in their populations after the emancipation of slavery, but the situation for the Black majority remained basically unchanged. Emancipation did not mean the end of injustices and oppression for Blacks, although the form of exploitation changed. Some freed slaves remained on the plantation as poorly paid labourers. They were free, but free to do what? Having lived for at least seven generations in a situation of total dependency they were ill-prepared for, nor did they have the means with which to establish, an independent existence. Most of the arable land was owned by those who had money or access to credit — Europeans, Mulattoes and the more-recently-arrived merchant groups. Land available to freed slaves was unsuitable for sugar-cane farming, adaptable at best only for subsistence farming. Survival remained a chancy, desperate livelihood.

The educational institutions established in these colonies were based on the European systems, with no thought given to the actual needs of the majority population. The intent was to make "good" civil servants of the populace who would superintend the interests of the governing European power, i.e. the continued production and exportation of the bulk of raw materials and agricultural products. This education, moreover, was costly, enabling only those with money and land the opportunity to utilize its advantage. Thereby, almost all of the Black population was excluded. The established economic structure and its exclusivist supporting educational system served only to keep most Blacks locked into poverty and oppression. Under such conditions, those behaviours and attitudes that had been adaptive in coping with enslavement continued to function meaningfully as survival mechanisms even after emancipation.

There are parallels between the freeing of slaves and the release of inmates. Studies demonstrate that the latter experience great difficulty in their attempts to adjust to the wider society after release from a total institution. Africans and their descendants, unable to return to their original societies ("their outside") after generations of "incarceration", were forced to accept an established social order havings its raison d'etre in slavery. Africans attempting to establish a new social order were out of touch with developing socio-economic trends in Africa. At the same time they were barred from competition with elite Europeans and Creoles who had been able to remain au courant with developing trends in Europe. Thus for Africans the social order "inside" slavery and "outside" of slavery was basically the same — the institution of slavery and its consequent social structures.

Summary

This chapter has outlined the historical development of the Caribbean area. Colonies from which raw materials and agricultural products could be produced were established by European countries. Economic expediencies led to the enslavement of Africans to provide the large labour force needed. These Africans came from a wide social spectrum in highly-structured and cohesive societies in which cohesiveness was maintained by religion, which was an important aspect of daily life. Marriage was polygynous, exogamy representing an alliance between two clans. Africans in the Caribbean became slaves, suffering brutal circumstances allegedly designed to make willing Christian workers of them. Centuries of such enslavement was destructive of many African traditions and institutions, and also psychologically damaging to African individuals. In their attempts to cope with the horrors of their existence, Africans adopted values, attitudes and behaviours that enhanced their chances at survival and group solidarity. These adaptations, together with a few remaining aspects of African culture and an oppressive economic structure established by Europeans, laid the foundation for the "culture" that was to evolve after emancipation.

The totality of the institution of slavery, and the methods employed for the control of slaves, led to long-lasting and devastating effects, not just on the subjugated but on their descendants as well. The debasement of race, physical features and African traditions was used as an integral part of control. Out of a survival instinct, slaves came to identify with their oppressors, even accepting the negative valuation of Africanness. In addition the preferential treatment accorded Mulattoes reinforced this identification, which led to the internalization of a negative self-concept by Blacks.

> " . . . We have been taught to be angry at, ashamed of, anything that differs too much from mythical ideal of the middle-class of the majority culture — skin that is "too dark", hair that is "too kinky", dress, talk and music that is "too loud".[88]

Years of physical, socio-psychological, economic and educational dependency on European authority, as well as the emphasis placed on the "inherent inferiority" of African attributes, still did not completely stifle the drive, ambition and creativity of Blacks, however. These oppressive experiences, though, have left a subtle lingering dependency on authority figures as well as an institutionalized self-doubt among many Blacks.[89]

Familial values and inter-personal relationships, which for milennia were stable and functional in Africa, were systematically destroyed by the tactics used to control slaves. While the mother/child bond was of necessity maintained to some degree, the man's role in the family was undermined. Since child management was shared by mothers and drivers, some semblance of an extended family was also maintained, but the child-rearing techniques resorted to resulted in children being fearful of adults.

Inter-racial mating produced offspring who were light in complexion. These Mulattoes often were accorded preferential treatment by their white fathers and formed the nucleus of the future privileged group in the slave population. This was the basis for the emergence of a class system based on shade of skin, and constitutes a major factor contributing to divisiveness within the Black community.

Africans did not accept their enslavement in total passivity. They rebelled whenever they could mobilize their numbers. Rebellious episodes were met with severe reprisals, but many slaves continued to rebel, accepting the consequences. Many resigned themselves to the hopelessness of their situation and relied on their strong religious beliefs as their only means of escape. Still others committed suicide. Forms of protest less easily detected emerged in magic and African folk tales. These structures provided a safe release for anger and frustration, and gave slaves a vicarious feeling of at least a measure of freedom and control.

At emancipation many of the African traditions that could have helped re-establish stable families and viable cohesive societies had been extinguished or were so grossly modified as to be functionally meaningless.

> " . . . distinctive folk features are not so much ancestral ethnic residues

> as by-products of slavery, racial discrimination, unequal access to benefits, and cultural lag."[90]

Moreover, "freed slaves" were exactly what the term implies, since they were denied resources, and opportunities to establish themselves as truly independent in the prevailing Caribbean context, by a small minority who controlled the resources. Hence their freedom meant only that they were free to engage in a different, but no less stringent, battle for survival against overwhelming odds.

Later-comers to the Caribbean have had several structural advantages over the Black majority in competing in the socio-economic structures of the territories. East Indians, though also severely mistreated on the plantation, were not brainwashed into accepting that their cultural heritage was inferior to that of Europeans. Their plantation experience was also of a much shorter duration than that of Africans. Hence where East Indians are found in large numbers (such as in Trinidad and Guyana) they tend to have stable family units and form a cohesive group, because the institutions that made this possible survived the plantation system.[91]

Thus the early development of Caribbean territories saw the establishment of socio-economic structures and contexts in which Africans and their descendants were mere commodities. This placed Blacks at a disadvantage, the aftermath of which was to continue for many generations.

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CHAPTER II

Social and Cultural Background

In this chapter we attempt to provide readers with an understanding of the Caribbean institutions and processes that have shaped the lives of individuals who encounter difficulties and eventually require counselling. Since the majority of adult individuals and heads of families came to Canada between 1965 and 1975, the data presented here, though dated, is intended to reflect the conditions that prevailed in the West Indies prior to the migration of these individuals.

The interracial mating patterns that developed during slavery, as well as special privileges accorded Mulattoes, laid the foundation for a social class structure in the West Indies in which class and colour became closely linked. Blacks were slaves; many blacks of lighter complexion (mulattoes) were free; whites were landowners or overseers. East Indians, Portuguese and poor Chinese came to the West Indies as indentured labourers, while Middle Easterners, Jews, as well as wealthy Chinese and East Indians, came as merchants. This pattern of settlement in the West Indies was not originally motivated by racial features but soon became important. Once this pattern was established, its maintenance was essential for the white colonial groups. Educational opportunities and higher status jobs were historically restricted to those of "lighter" complexion: whites, Chinese, Middle Easterners and light-skinned Blacks.[1]

Today West Indian countries continue to have racially diversified populations. The racial composition of the population, however, varies from territory to territory, as Table I documents.

An understanding of the class structure is crucial to understanding West Indian culture, as social class plays an important role in identifying variations in cultural patterns.[2] For purposes of this discussion, the terms "class" and "social class" are used only to permit comparisons between various groups in society with respect to such variables as life-style, education, occupation, income level, and family organization. We in no way intend to connote inferiority or superiority, desirability or undesirability by the use of these terms. They are used merely to help the reader understand the different life-styles of various groups of people in the Caribbean.

TABLE I

Racial Composition of West Indian Countries

% By Country

Racial Groups	1. Jamaica	2. Guyana	3. Barbados	4. Trinidad & Tobago
African	76.3	31.3	76.8	43.0
Mixed Races (Afro-European (Afro-East Indian (Afro-Chinese	17.3	11.0	18.0	18.0
East Indian	1.7	50.2	0.1	36.0
European	0.8	1.4	5.0	2.0
Chinese	0.6	0.6	0.1	1.0
Syrians (Middle Easterners)	0.01	—	—	—
Amerindians	—	4.6	—	—
Other	3.1	—	—	—
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

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2. Report of the British Guyana Commission of Inquiry into Racial problems in the public service. Geneva, Switzerland: The International Commission of Jurists 1965, p. 33
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Class and Colour

Caribbean social structure is characterized by three main "social class" groupings: the lower, the middle and the upper "class". As recently as 1967, Miller demonstrated a correlation between class and colour that was significant, with darker Jamaicans (80 per cent of the population) tending to be of "lower class", and those of lighter complexion including Chinese, Middle Easterners and light-skinned Blacks belonging to the middle and upper "classes". In addition to the large number of Blacks, most of Jamaica's East Indian population and some blacks of light complexion also belong to the lower class. There are, as well, small concentrations of poor whites, mostly of German descent, in this group.[5]

Traditionally, the middle class was composed mostly of fair-skinned descendants of the free Black population of slavery days and the interracial unions of the post-slavery era.

In recent decades, however, a number of dark-skinned Blacks have moved up the social ladder to middle class status by virtue of their education. One would assume that as educational opportunities become increasingly available to the dark-skinned people, more members of this group will attain middle class status. The vast majority of Blacks, however, continue to live in poverty, and this situation is likely to continue for quite some time, until the education system becomes a less restricted avenue through which to move. There is a limited number of secondary school places. When children write the "common entrance exam" (which is still graded on a curve) only as many children as there are places can pass into the high school program. At the end of secondary school, children write the General Certificate of Education.* This determines eligibility to attend universities in the West Indies, North America and Europe. Many other gifted children are deprived of the opportunity to receive a secondary or post-secondary education because the educational facilities are inadequate for their accommodation. Middle and upper class families with more money are able to provide their children with extra tutoring, or send them to a special preparatory school enabling them to pass the common entrance exam.

The Chinese and Middle Easterners have achieved social mobility into the middle and upper classes by dint of wealth earned in businesses that they established while the territories were still under colonial rule. Few members of these ethnic groups, therefore, are within the ranks of the lower class. In addition, members of these groups tend not to marry inter-racially and have remained culturally homogeneous.

Most scholars discussing Caribbean societies have made reference to the "white bias" that pervades their institutions and the thinking of the people. Since the days of slavery, blackness has come to have highly negative social connotations while whiteness has been associated with power, privilege and the desirable.[4] Therefore, to have "good hair" means to have hair that is relatively straight, resembling that of caucasians. To be of a very dark complexion is not considered physically attractive. Miller (1969) demonstrated the white bias in a study among Jamaican adolescents. Those adolescents whose physical features were decidedly African expressed dissatisfaction with their appearance whereas those with features resembling those of caucasians expressed greater satisfaction with themselves.[5]

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*The General Certificate of Education 'O' (ordinary) level is the equivalent of grade 12 in Canada and 'A' (advanced) level the equivalent of grade 13.

In understanding families from the West Indies it is very important to take class variables into account, as social class reflects such areas of culture as speech patterns, patterns of family organization, and values (including religion). The major differences between the upper and middle class are economic ones. Their cultural patterns and practices are similar. In terms of values, language and mating patterns, these two classes will be considered as one and contrasted with cultural practices among members of the lower class.

Analysis of Culture

Housing, Employment and Recreation

Members of the middle and upper classes enjoy life-styles that are comparable to middle, upper middle and upper class North Americans. They are very well housed, clothed, fed and educated. Their residences are generally large with much land and room space per person, attractively furnished and decorated and kept in good repair. Usually such families have household employees. Members of the middle class have usually acquired at least a high school education and more and more are obtaining college and university education. They tend to have civil service or professional jobs, or own businesses. Members of the upper class are usually owners of large businesses or companies and possess even more luxury in home and life. Therefore the economic difference between middle and upper class is basically one of degree.[6]

Most members of the lower class live in great economic deprivation. They are poorly educated, most having access only to a primary school education. At best they are employed as poorly-paid unskilled labourers. The rate of unemployment, in Jamaica for example, has been increasing at an alarming rate in recent decades; it rose from 15.5 per cent in 1946 to 25 per cent in 1973, and is still climbing. Vast numbers of this class remain unemployed and eke out an existence through subsistence farming or cottage industry.[7]

To say that the lower class is poorly housed is at best a gross understatement. Many of this class live in rural areas and are fortunate enough to live on "family land" handed down from generation to generation, but this is not the case for the urban poor who live on rented property or are "squatters".* Their dwellings are small and overcrowded with very unsanitary conditions.[8]

When it is difficult to provide one's family with adequate food, clothing and shelter, it is nigh to impossible to make provisions for adequate recreation. While members of the middle and upper classes are able to afford a wide range of activities, including the attractions open to tourists, urban families who do not have an adequate income must content themselves with a rather limited range of activities.

Speech

Speech is a major variable that has traditionally differentiated members of various social classes. Members of the middle and upper classes have generally spoken standard English, with some local words and expressions spoken with a local accent. Members of the lower class speak a dialect, which has traditionally been regarded as an inferior form of communication — "devoid of grammar" — since it does not reflect the structures that are characteristic of European languages. In recent years, however, linguistic scholars have recognized that this language is neither "devoid of grammar" nor is it inferior to any other language. The root of this language, it has been suggested, is indigenous to West Africa and was modified as Africans adapted to new world societies.[9] Members of the middle and upper classes also speak this dialect, particularly those who have moved up the social ladder within their own generation. Traditionally many middle and upper class individuals tended to look down on use of dialect, regarding it as inferior.[10] In recent years, however, members of all classes are developing a new pride in local speech patterns. This is perhaps due to the influence of the Black Power movement and the desire to reject all vestiges of colonialism, building cultures and societies that are truly reflective of their homelands. Standard English continues to be used in most business, educational and professional circles, but dialect reigns in informal situations.

West Indian dialects date back to 15th century West Africa, and (like other dialects spoken by Blacks in the New World) were modified when Africans, imported as slaves, were learning to speak English. This modification has continued over the years. Some words and phrases of this language are distinctly African, for example *NYAM,* meaning to eat, *OONOO,* meaning you, and *FE,* meaning to or for. Other words emerged when Africans pronounced English words as they heard them, such as *OOMAN,* for woman and *MI* for me. The pronunciation of yet other words represents the combination of African speech patterns with English patterns, for example the tendency to drop letters from some words or add them to others as in (*EE* for He, and *HASK* for ask. Some speech patterns are of uncertain origin, such as another tendency to add letters (e.g. *BWOY* for boy and *CYAP* for cap) and the transposition of letters (e.g. *FLIM* for film, *CERFITICATE,* for certificate). (Herskovits, 1958). The Rastafarian Cult has further modified the dialect especially as spoken by many young people and has added some interesting variations including "I and I" or "I" for me or my, *ITAL,* meaning without salt, HAIL (pronounced 'AIL), as a greeting, and *IRIE* meaning alright or nice.[11] Dialects developed in all areas of the New World to which Africans were brought as slaves. Although each dialect is unique to its region, there are many similarities, i.e. sentence structure, words, phrases. Modifications of the West African languages have been based on the language of the slavemasters in each region (i.e. French, Spanish or English) and the degree of contact between slaves and masters.[12]

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*Squatters are individuals living on land to which they have no legal right.

While many individuals develop fluency in both English and local dialect (especially in areas where school facilities are limited) some people have little opportunity to use English in speech and writing, but do understand spoken English.[13] This situation exists in all other Caribbean Territories too, but Jamaicans seem to be at the greatest disadvantage, due to severe socio-political and economic difficulties.[14]

Family Life

African family structure disappeared during slavery and four other identifiable structures evolved. These alternative patterns are each accepted as "normal" within the particular stratum of the social class system where they are found.[15]

Among the middle and upper class, the family tends to be a nuclear unit based on marriage according to Christian principles. Monogamy is practised to the same extent as it is among middle class North Americans, and children are usually born within the confines of a marital union. When an unmarried woman in this group has a child, this is not considered "normal" socially-acceptable behaviour.[16] Among the lower class, there is traditional Christian marriage, as well as three other patterns. Christian marriage stresses the husband/wife relationship; the other patterns stress blood relationships of either the mother or father. Here are descriptions of these other patterns.

Faithful concubinage A man cohabits with a woman without legalizing the union. Both man and woman are, however, committed to one another and strive to make this a successful relationship. The children born in such a union take the father's name. Many such couples legalize their unions in later years, sometimes after their children have started families of their own. In the event that this union breaks down, the individuals involved might take new partners starting another similar union. Again the children born in this second union will take the father's name. Hence there are many women who have children with different surnames.

It is this situation that non-West Indians label promiscuity and immorality. This is not to deny that there is some promiscuity, but certainly not to the extent that it would seem. Many women, due to poverty, high unemployment and a lack of income maintenance programs, are attracted into such unions. When the union with the first man has broken down and she is left with children whom she must support, the woman needs financial assistance from another man. In order to legitimize receiving money from the new partner, and for other reasons to be discussed later in this section, she produces more children.[17]

Serial polygyny Where individuals become involved in a series of the above type of relationship, it is known as serial polygyny. An interesting phenomenon in this family situation is that stepfathers are generally not permitted to act as a parent to stepchildren. Children from previous unions are encouraged to remember their natural fathers, even in cases where the children might never see their fathers again. The literature on West Indian family patterns does not give any clear rationale for the existence of this phenomenon. One can only hypothesize that:

- since children are perceived as sources of security for one's old age, it is expected that such children meet their obligations to their fathers and assist them when they are no longer able to support themselves;
- this practice might be an incest-control mechanism, since fathers from broken unions become involved in subsequent unions, producing more children. Half-brothers and half-sisters therefore could become involved in conjugal unions if unaware of who their father is. This also demonstrates the emphasis placed on blood ties.

The maternal family The grandmother (maternal or paternal), the natural mother, or some other female, takes on the functions of mother and father. This family arrangement exists when a young girl has a baby, when a woman has lost her partner or when she migrates to search for employment. In this case the father or fathers of the children will sometimes provide for them as much as is economically feasible. The mother who has migrated will support the children by sending money to the surrogate parent. If the mother has migrated from a rural to an urban setting within the territory she will continue to visit her children. If she migrates to another country with hopes of eventual reunion, her probably weak economic situation makes visiting very difficult, if not impossible, with the result that there are often extended periods of separation, sometimes as long as 15 years. Reunion after such lengthy periods of separation causes a multitude of psycho-social problems which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter III.

The keeper family A man and woman cohabit on the basis of extra-residential mating, i.e. the man maintains a separate residence from the woman while he supports her and the children in this relationship. This union may become a faithful concubinage. The man in this situation may be a married man keeping a mistress. His wife may, or may not, be aware of this arrangement. If she is aware, she might "nag" him from time to time, but she is not likely to break up her marriage on this account. The closeness of friends and many relatives provides the support she needs to cope with such a situation. If the husband and wife migrate, such support is lost, and if such a situation arises, she feels threatened and is more likely to fight back.[18]

In the keeper relationship in which the man is married, it is not unusual for his wife to raise these children as her own, should the cohabitation relationship break down or the "mistress" die. This demonstrates the acceptance of children in that (regardless of the circumstances of their birth) the social value is that they must be cared for.[19]

There have been many theories put forward to account for the mating patterns found among West Indians of the lower socio-economic class. These fall into three main categories: (1) the cultural retention hypothesis, which regards many aspects of the Afro-American family system as survivals of a West African family structure; (2) the sociological approach, which suggests that the Black family as we know it developed largely as a result of the conditions prevailing during slavery which prevented the establishment of stable family units; (3) socio-economic theories, which attribute these patterns to the current social and economic conditions under which Blacks in the Americas live.

We recognize that African family patterns and the experience of slavery did play a vital role in shaping the lower class West Indian Black family, but we also contend that it is the current socio-economic factors that maintain these structures. The ancestors of almost all Blacks in the Americas came from Africa and experienced the rigours of slavery, but Blacks who attain economic security tend to enter into stable family unions based on marriage.

When such security is lacking it is not possible, or even realistic, for individuals to enter into as permanent a union and one involving as much responsibility and commitment as does marriage. Instead, people tend to form relationships that are functional in terms of the economic and social realities of their existence. Therefore it is not unusual for couples to live together as man and wife for varying periods without taking steps to legalize this arrangement until economic security is ensured. In rural settings, where social support systems are stronger and where a man is able to engage in subsistence farming to support a family, conjugal unions are more stable and enduring, many of these lower class people believe in and practise monogamy.[20]

Children

In most West Indian families of all classes, the birth of a child is regarded as a special event, the child being "a gift from God and a blessing". It is expected that a child will bring happiness to the parents and will be a source of security in their old age. The sentiment regarding children is so strong that a woman who has not conceived is sometimes labeled a "mule". Indeed, in many social circles a childless woman is the object of pity and sometimes contempt and derision. Members of the lower class tend to believe that a woman who has not had a child, or the number of children with which "God has chosen to bless her", will suffer physically and emotionally and sometimes even become mentally disordered. For this reason many feel that it is dangerous for a woman to prevent the birth of a child and important for her to "have out her lot", i.e. have the number of children "with which God has blessed her". Because children are seen in this light, abortion is rarely practised and there is a strong prohibition against "giving up" a child for adoption, as is done in the North American context. Additionally, many men feel that if a woman "bears his child" this is proof of her love. Many women consequently believe that if they "have a baby for a man" this will "hold" him, i.e. retain his interest in them. Thus one measure of womanhood is producing children, and one measure of manhood is the ability to impregnate women.[21]

Many parents in all classes tend to view their children as extensions of themselves, possessing few individual rights, perceptions and feelings. Children, by their behaviour, may either bring respect and pride to their parents or tarnish their reputation. Children's behaviour in public will either be a "good or bad" reflection on the parents. Hence a great stress is placed on socializing children not to be "rude" and to making them compliant and "decent", i.e. respectable.[22] Children are expected to behave properly and be quiet; an old Jamaican adage expresses these expectations: "children are to be seen and not heard."

When children begin to walk, explore their environment and attempt to assert their will, they are generally labeled "rude" or "fas", i.e. inquisitive. Parents therefore become quite authoritarian at this time, in order to force their child to be passive and obedient. When children start interacting with members of their peer group, there is a great fear that they will "keep bad company", which might cause them to become "rude", which would again reflect poorly on the parents. For minor offences, punishment usually takes the form of verbal threats (which are seldom carried out) or scoldings; for more serious offences "flogging" or spanking is the order of the day.[23]

With respect to sex there is little open discussion between parent and child. Middle and upper class families will generally give their children books on the subject to read, but children in the lower class receive little information about how their bodies function, about puberty, menstruation, the reproductive process, or contraception. An exception would be the agricultural lower class children who have had the opportunity to observe animals copulate. Even so, they may not be able to make the generalization from animals to humans.

Unfortunately, it is not rare for a girl to be totally unprepared and alarmed when she begins to menstruate. At this time she will usually go to her mother who will then instruct her about the use of sanitary protection, along with a warning to her that she is to "keep herself quiet", "behave", and that she is not to "play with boys" (all of these expressions meaning not to engage in sexual activities). She is also told that any month she does not "see her period" she will have to "answer to mother for it". More often than not the young woman is clueless as to what her mother is talking about. It is not unusual for young women to conceive without connecting this occurrence to sexual intercourse, though this is more frequent with girls from lower class families. Given these conditions, discussion about sex takes place, as it often does here, predominantly within the peer group, albeit in middle class families there is some minimum of discussion about sex between parent and child.[24]

Due to such limited discussion about sex within the home, and the limited formal education of most members of the lower class, many tend to have a very poor understanding of how the body functions. There is, therefore, great fear of family planning; many people believe that the various contraceptive methods will induce serious bodily harm. For example, many fear that condoms will "get lost" inside a woman's body and thereby kill her, that an I.U.D. will "find its way up" to the neck and choke the user and that the contraception pill either makes the woman sick ("sick'er") or will make her "smell funny".[25] Many women have strongly negative feelings about tubal ligations since they are very fearful of the "cut" that is made before the operation can be performed. "Mi no like cut" ("I do not like cuts") "Mi 'fraid fe get cut" ("I am afraid of being cut") are common responses of lower class women when tubal ligation is suggested. Because of such powerful fearfulness of family planning, and/or the perception by some Blacks that it is the White's way of achieving Black genocide, lower class families are extremely large. As noted, the belief that children will insure security in old age also contributes to the number of children born in these families. Another reason for the reluctance to practise family planning in the lower class is that the infant mortality rate was once much higher. In this almost classic contemporary example of the demographic transition from high to lower infant mortality, with a continuing high birthrate, there is still the belief that to ensure survival of at least some children, couples must have large families. The infant mortality rate has declined but the demographic birth requirement, which evolved over many centuries, will take years to be erased.

In Jamaica such attitudes toward child-bearing have resulted in a population explosion. This has created many problems, particularly for the education system. By the end of 1977, 60 per cent of the island's population was under age 19; 50 per cent under age 15. Consequently there were some communities in which schools had facilities for only two thirds of the school-aged child population.[26] In rural farm areas, where people lived on "family land" and are members of close knit communities, the practice of having large families has fewer detrimental effects than in urban centres. When farm families migrate to urban areas, or to other countries, however, many psycho-social problems develop due to the loss of traditional support systems and resources from farming. Living conditions in the urban settings are usually overcrowded and it becomes virtually impossible to provide an adequate diet for such a large number of children. Hence, while not widespread, Kwashiorkor*, Marasmus**, and other diseases of gross malnutrition are not at all uncommon. Health authorities are now attempting to prevent such problems and to develop techniques that deal with them more effectively when they do arise.

Stabilizing Forces of the West Indian Family

When discussing the alternative patterns of domestic organization and family relationships found among West Indians (the majority of whom are Black) it is important not to make the same mistake that many social workers, sociologists and other social scientists have made — discussing Black families in terms of pathology. It is true that they are different in many respects from the white, middle class Canadian family, but this difference does not mean that there is anything inferior or pathological about the patterns of Black families. Like all other family systems, they have their strengths, weaknesses and stabilizing forces. As long as social workers and other helping professionals continue to regard West Indian and Black families in a pejorative light (as they have been too wont to do) it will continue to be difficult for them to develop therapeutic relationships with their clients and therefore help them. Let us also look at the major stabilizing forces of the West Indian family.

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*Kwashiorkor — severe protein deficiency.

**Marasmus — severe deficiency of calories and protein, severe tissue wasting, loss of subcutaneous fat and dehydration.

West Indian Family Structure and Process

The first strength of the Black West Indian family is its extended, rather than nuclear. structure. Even middle class families that can be described as nuclear retain features of the classical extended family. West Indian families are characterized by a supportive bond and frequent i[illegible]action between family members outside the immediate family resid[illegible]e.[27] In the rural context, the extended family structure includes not only blood relatives and close friends, but the entire community is incorporated into its structure. Child care and discipline are therefore not only the responsibility of relatives but of the total community members. Children know that the adult members of the community are concerned about them and have the same expectations of them as do their parents. They fear and respect these adults as they do their parents. Adults who are not related to the child are addressed as aunt, uncle, sister or brother. Distant adult cousins are also addressed as aunt and uncle or with other titles denoting respect. Children also know that if they are "rude" they will be disciplined or even spanked by other adults in the community and that this action will be supported by their parents.

These structures were also traditional in urban areas but, due to increased migration and other variables, they are being gradually eroded. In spite of this, in many areas, "communal" support continues to operate as a powerful stabilizing force for each family, and close ties are maintained even between relatives living thousands of miles apart. This closeness can be referred to as a "strong kinship bond".[28]

Because of the close supportive relationship in this extended system, families and individuals are assured of help at times of crisis. In cases where the immediate family is experiencing difficulty in providing adequately for large numbers of children, it is not uncommon for informal adoptions to take place. A child or children may be "adopted" by a member of the extended family or of the community. The adoptive parent in many instances is a single woman who takes this step to "help" the child and his family. These "adoptions" are not usually legalized and pose problems for many on migration. Adopted children and their families of origin maintain contact with each other and if they are successful at their education and an occupation, they will in turn help their siblings who have not had their opportunities. Thus "adoptions" also take place between siblings and in times of extreme hardship entire households are cared for by members of the extended family.

The elderly are not segregated but remain an integral part of the family with an active role. Old people are respected and cared for in much the same way as they were in traditional African society. If an elderly person chooses to live alone, the extended family and the community will assure his or her survival.[29]

Work Orientation

A strong work orientation is another strength of the Black family.[30] Due to economic necessity both male and female members of the lower class work to support the family. In the middle class, as well, many women do work.

When families are unable to earn a living through the normative channels provided by society, they develop alternatives for economic survival. Adult squatters in urban areas came to rely upon "scuffling", petty manufacturing, and selling scrap salvaged from the dump. These people were self-employed, although they regarded themselves as unemployed, as did society at large. Notwithstanding, in areas where secular unemployment was big, "scuffling" provided an important functional alternative to paid employment.[31]

Family Role Adaptation

The "adaptability of family roles" is another strength of the Black family.[32] Such adaptability is an essential stabilizing force in times of divorce, separation, illness or economic hardship. In single-parent families, women fulfil the roles of both mother and father, and when both parents work, older siblings fulfil the role of substitute parents, caring for the younger children. Women are able to develop a high degree of self reliance and are able to function independently when necessary.[33]

Family Achievement Perspective

A fifth stabilizing force is the "high achievement orientation" among family members. Even in the poorest of families, parents have high aspirations for their children, and each generation encourages the next to move a "step" ahead. Desnoes (1965) conducted a study in which he found that children tended to aspire to jobs requiring a higher level of skill than those of their parents. Even though 52 per cent of the parents in the sample were unskilled workers, over 80 per cent of the children aspired to skilled, clerical or professional jobs.[34]

Religious and Magical Orientation

To this point, West Indian culture has been discussed within the framework of social class. It has been established that the key variable to an understanding of this culture is the social class system. Another important variable is that of religion. Helping professionals, in making assessments, should recognize and acknowledge religious factors. Religious practices, like other aspects of West Indian culture, are influenced by social class.

The concepts of religion and magic are integral parts of the belief system in all classes, but education determines perceptual differences. Most members of the middle and upper class perceive religion as a basic philosophy that is meaningful in building personal strengths, but many members of the lower class seem to make no distinction between these concepts of both religion and magic. Religion, like magic, is perceived as a mystical external force over which they have no control. Members of the middle and upper class tend to belong to the well established Christian denominations: the Church of England (Anglican), Presbyterian, Methodist, Moravian, Roman Catholic and Baptist. In contrast, members of the lower class tend to belong to religious groups with a revivalist flavour. These include The Church of God, Holiness, and the Apostolic Church. Some members from both classes belong to various cults and also consult Obeah men. In the case of the middle class people, this is usually done in secret since it is not considered to be "respectable", or compatible with being "educated".

Many of the religious rituals of members of the lower class and of a few members of the middle class, represent survivals of West African practices. These were described in detail earlier, and are reviewed here. As such, they tend to have a world view in which the spiritual realm is a very important aspect of daily life. In the region of West Africa from which most of the slaves were captured, the outstanding feature of the cultures (which have been identified by various Western and African scholars) is the intimate relationship between the religious and the physical realm. In fact, no sharp dichotomy was recognized between these realms. This perspective still survives in those parts of the New World where descendants of West Africans are to be found.

There is a strong belief in God as a supreme being who loves, cares for, and provides for his creatures. It is not unusual to hear West Indians who are experiencing financial and other difficulties say "de Lord will provide" meaning God will take care of them and solve all of their problems in some miraculous way. Spiritual methods are therefore used to solve physical or concrete problems, the origin of which they believe can be traced to the spiritual world.

Another powerful belief is that human beings have spirits as well as bodies and that the spirit continues to live on after a person dies. Spirits can exert a powerful influence on human affairs, either for the bad or for the good. They continue to communicate with people and make their presence known through dreams and visions and possessing people during religious ceremonies, sometimes causing them to speak in tongues or prophesy. Not coincidentally, the belief in spirits and powers, as well as in magical practices and in the power of the spirits to heal, are important principles of the Afro-Caribbean religious system. As this is an extremely important cultural aspect for many West Indians, we will examine the specifics of some of these beliefs.

All life, it is held, must have a proper ending as well as a proper beginning. If an individual dies and is not given a proper funeral, the spirit will not be "sent off properly" and its wrath will be kindled.[35] Such a spirit is known in Jamaica as a "duppy", the "old hag" in Trinidad, and by other names in other parts of Afro-America. This spirit will express his or her anger by bringing bad luck to those who have wronged him or her, causing sickness, financial difficulties and other forms of distress. Thus if a child dies at a young age or becomes seriously ill, this is often attributed to the work of a "duppy".

Also, if a child is born at all close to the time of death of a member of the family (within a year or two) it is sometimes believed that the spirit of the older family member has returned to earth in another form (this element is probably an East Indian, rather than West African, survival in religion but one that has generalized beyond that group). For this reason, if a child is born close to the time of the death of someone who the parent had angered or displeased in some way, it is feared that the duppy might possess the child and make it behave in such a way as to seek revenge on, or otherwise harm, the parent. Thus a child in a family might be scapegoated because it is believed that "a duppy deh pan 'im" (a ghost is possessing him or her).

Illness is often not regarded as a physiological condition. Instead it is thought to be the result of the attack of a "duppy" or another human being who has sought the help of an obeahman in harming the person, a form of seeking revenge against that person or a close relative. For example, the mother of a child with congenital heart disease once told a social worker that the child's father (from whom she was estranged) was sick because she had "set a duppy" on him and his new girlfriend, but they had "turned it back on her". As she was "wearing guard" (protected) "it did lick the pickny instead" (it fell on the child instead).

Because sickness is believed to have a spiritual cause but a physical manifestation, it is believed that it is not sufficient to merely treat the body with medicine, so an obeahman, or other healer (sometimes called "good doctor") is consulted.* This "good doctor" will prescribe "herbs" for the patient, and counsel the patient and his or her family about what must be done to pacify the "duppy" or rectify the situation with the person who presumably was responsible for the misfortune.

Difficulties in marriage and other inter-personal relationships and financial problems are also thought to have a similar origin. Thus, healers are also consulted to win or restore love; insure success in courtship, marriage or other unions; prevent failure in business undertakings; prevent misfortune; deal with financial problems; increase fertility and obtain a child of the desired sex.[36] These religious beliefs have survived in the New World as vestiges of the sublimated hostility at the brutality of slavery, and became institutionalized in private religious cults. Afro-Caribbeans clung to these beliefs as their only hope for retribution. Though they retaliated with violent rebellions on occasion, this spiritual means provided a greater, more directly personal, constancy of expressing their sentiments.

Today, many West Indians continue to seek magical solutions to problems, and at times feel that they are the victims of forces over which they have no control at all. There is, they postulate, nothing that they or anyone else can do, short of being the object of a prayed-for miracle, to solve some of the problems they experience. In their words, "the Lord will provide" and if God doesn't choose to, certainly no one can expect the individual to do anything to promote such supra-human change. Moreover, if it is the Lord's will that an individual should suffer some misfortune, many agree that to change this state would be to "fly in God's face" and incur even greater wrath.

These, then, are some of the common threads running through Afro-Carribean religious philosophies. They can be observed in their informal manifestations, or they can take a collective form, as in such Afro-American religious movements as Shango (Trinidad), Santeria (Cuba) and Rastafarianism (Jamaica).[37]

Let us take a closer look at Rastafarianism, which originated in

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*Many West Indians in Toronto are inclined to deny the existence of these practices. This is probably due to the fact that the practices are such strong African survivals, and having been taught that all things African are negative, they feel embarrassed. Ignorance as to the magical practices among other ethnic groups also adds to these negative perceptions on the part of some West Indians. On examining advertisements in some Black Community newspapers, however, one finds a wide variety of spiritual healers and magical practitioners abundantly evident.

Jamaica and has had a very powerful influence in the Caribbean. It is also very influential among Black youth from all parts of the Caribbean who are now living in Canada. It is conjectured that Rastafarianism emerged in response to the inferior position to which Blacks had been assigned in Jamaican society. The first Rastafarians were followers of Jamaican-born Marcus Garvey, who led a movement among Blacks in North America and the Caribbean. Garvey emphasized pride in the Black race and the African heritage of Blacks, unity between Black people in all parts of the world, and the return of all Black people to Africa, the homeland from which their ancestors had been captured.[38] Marcus Garvey, it is alleged, had told his followers that they would be delivered one day, when a Black king was crowned in Africa. Therefore, when Ras (meaning prince) Tafari was crowned as the emperor of Ethiopia in 1930 and given the title of Haile Selassie, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Conquering Lion of Judah, some of Garvey's followers regarded this as the fulfilment of Garvey's prophecy.[39] They believed that Haile Selassie was the Messiah come to earth to redeem Blacks and to liberate them from the oppression under which they had suffered for many centuries. Jamaica was viewed as Babylon, because Jamaicans of African descent were regarded as being in captivity in the same way in which the ancient Israelites had been in captivity in ancient Babylon.[40]

Barrett (1974) has given an excellent summary of Rastafarian beliefs: Haile Selassie is God; Black people are the reincarnation of ancient Israelites in captivity in Jamaica; Whites are inferior to Blacks; Jamaica is a hopeless hell, Ethiopia is heaven; Haile Selassie is arranging for the return of all expatriated Africans to Africa; Black people shall rule the world in the near future.[41] Nettleford (1970) also presents much detail about Rastafarian beliefs and doctrines. Some of these practices include: the use of the Bible as an authority, particularly the Old Testament prophets and the parts of the New Testament in which there is prophecy; the growing of beards and hair (locks); wearing the colours red, green, black and yellow; eating unsalted (ital) food and drinking neither cow's milk nor alcoholic beverages. Rastafarians are not to be involved in the business and other affairs of "Babylonian" society. Nor are they to acquire land or much in the way of possessions, as it is believed that the "time is at hand" when the ships will be coming to take Black people home to Africa.[42]

Beginning in the 1960s, Rastafarian thinking began to profoundly influence many Jamaican youth, even those who did or did not practise Rastafarianism as their religion.[43] Thus the Rastafari have given young Jamaicans of African descent a sense of pride in their race and their African heritage, and an enhanced self-concept. It has removed blackness from a status of contempt and inferiority, and promoted pride in areas of Jamaican culture in which African survivals are manifest, e.g. speech patterns, drumming. Black Jamaicans can now take pride in their hair, nose and other physical features, no longer feeling shame that their ancestors came from Africa.[44]

Even so, the damage to the self-concept of the Black population will take years to be reconstituted, since Blacks have been near the bottom of the West Indian and Canadian social ladder for hundreds of years.

Rastafarianism then could be considered one of the manifestations of Black power in Jamaica. As the movement has risen to a position of popularity only within recent years, it will take a few more years before its impact will be fully understood.

Summary

In the West Indies, skin colour has traditionally been closely linked to social class. Members of the lower class tend to be darkest in complexion; members of the middle class are lighter; upper class persons are white or "fair" black. The interrelation between "class" and "colour" has affected the self-concept of both individuals and aggregates — as "whiteness" became associated with positive attributes and "blackness" with the negative.

It is essential to have an understanding of social class within the West Indian context, as social class is a useful construct in helping to identify variations in cultural patterns. These variations are particularly evident in education, occupation, life-style, speech, family life and religious values. Members of the lower class are likely to:

- have limited formal education;
- be employed in jobs requiring little skill;
- be unemployed or "scuffling";
- live in the condition of economic deprivation, with greater deprivation in the urban areas;
- speak a local dialect which has African roots;
- have limited knowledge of standard English;
- enter into three types of conjugal unions, not based on Christian marriage;
- have religious beliefs that are largely adaptive survivals from Africa.

Notwithstanding, there are many members of the lower class who are upwardly mobile, believe in and practise monogamy and have mastered standard English. Conjugal relationships, interestingly, have a higher degree of stability in rural areas.

Members of the middle and upper class tend to:

- have at least a high school education and many are aspiring to a college or university degree;
- be employed in the civil service or in the professions;
- live in a condition of moderate economic security or even affluence;
- speak standard English as well as the local dialect;
- enter into conjugal unions based on Christian marriage;
- belong to one of the well-established Christian denominations.

The main avenues for social mobility have been education and migration, although some individuals have moved up the social ladder via private enterprise.

Those who are involved in the helping professions need to be aware that, for many West Indians, counselling, and even an approach to a formal agency to seek personal help, is an unfamiliar experience. Problems which are the focus of intervention for the helping professional in the Canadian context are, in the West Indies, dealt with through the resources of one's extended family community. Some individuals rely on the skills of an Obeahman for problem resolution. This belief in magic stems from the fact that many see themselves as victims of spiritual actions beyond human control; therefore little can be done at a personal and professional level to solve problems. If magic does not work, then nothing else will. The implications of these beliefs, as they relate to the counselling process, will be discussed in Chapter IV.

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CHAPTER III

The aim of the discussion that follows is to familiarize readers with the factors that motivated the mass migration from the Caribbean during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Therefore the general and statistical information presented relates to that period.

Migration

Beginning in the early 1960s and continuing into the 1970s there was a great increase in the number of West Indians migrating to Canada. Canada statistics show that between 1963 and 1967 there were 17,159 immigrants from Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, while between 1968 and 1973 the number quadrupled to 71,531.[1] These people leave behind all that is familiar and attempt to adapt to a new life-style, necessitating many changes. Some perceive these changes to be quite drastic. The process and degree of adaptation seem to depend on such interdependent variables as:

- formal education, which provides basic general knowledge of the Canadian environment and thus influences the individual's expectations and perceptions;
- expectations, which are based on the individual's motivation to migrate as well as preconceived notions of the realities in the new environment;
- preconceived notions, which if more attuned to the realities of Canada, will greatly facilitate an individual's adaptation. If perceptions were inaccurate, such individuals find the degree of change extremely drastic.

It is difficult for some to understand why individuals would place themselves in a situation requiring the extensive change that is necessitated by migration. What would possibly motivate people to leave their loved ones and their community? This section will address these questions by looking at West Indian migration and suggest why West Indians migrate, what are their expectations of the new environment and what are their actual experiences once they migrate. Migration, in many instances, seems to be associated with some form of crisis, so this section will also review the basic concepts of crisis theory, which in turn provides a framework for our discussion.

Crisis Theory: Overview and Application

Crisis theory, as it is discussed in the social work literature, rests on the notion of balance. Within this framework all systems, including physical and social systems, are regarded as being in, or working towards, a state of equilibrium or homeostasis. Social systems seek to maintain the level of equilibrium at which they are accustomed to function. All systems are from time to time confronted with forces that tax their ability to maintain balance. In human systems such as the individual personality system, the family, social networks, and formal organizations, these take the form of traumatic events and stressful situations or changed environment, which may originate within the system but usually from an external source. These stressful events, known in crises terminology as "hazardous events", create a problem within the life situation of the individual (or other social system) which must be resolved. In most instances the individual is able to cope and return to the previous level of functioning, or may achieve psychological or social growth. At other times, either because the force is particularly stressful, or the individual's coping mechanisms are inadequate, he or she is thrust into a state of tension, confusion and disorganization, which is referred to in the literature as the state of "active crisis".[2]

A chain of events, likely to lead to a state of crisis, involves a system that originally was in equilibrium encountering one or more "hazardous events". Dysfunctional responses to hazardous events create a state within the system in which it becomes even more vulnerable to further stress. When the system in such a state is confronted with a further stressful event, it is taxed beyond the limits of endurance; the system is precipitated into a state of active crisis.[3] The hazardous event, which may or may not be anticipated, is the beginning in a chain of events leading up to a state of crisis. Hazardous events that human development experts can anticipate are generally triggered by biological events and have psychological and social implications. They occur at various developmental stages of life. An example of this is the identity crisis into which some adolescents are thrust after the extensive biological changes of puberty.[4] Hazardous events that are unanticipated are those that involve, for example, the loss of someone or something valued by the individual, the unexpected introduction of someone into the social orbit (such as the birth of a premature or handicapped baby) and community disasters — floods, fires, hurricanes or socio-political upheavals.

Hazardous events of both categories have a variable relevance to migration, depending on the migrant's perception of the experience. For example, since migration involves planning, there are elements that can be classified as "anticipated". It is impossible, however, for any individual or family to realize all the changes and adjustments that they will be required to make, so there are elements that may be classified as "unanticipated". An example of an unanticipated hazardous event is when migration is motivated by socio-political change, or other events in the environment (from which the individuals are fleeing) that are perceived by them as being a social or physical disaster.

Any hazardous event for an individual precipitates an emotional reaction. Individuals will perceive and respond to an event, each in his or her own way. It is on the basis of their perceptions and responses that efforts will be made to resolve the problem created by the hazardous event. The hazardous event may be perceived as a threat, a loss, or challenge, and each perception is accompanied by its own unique emotional responses. An individual is likely to respond with anxiety to hazardous events that are perceived as a threat to his or her psychological integrity. Events perceived as a loss can thrust an individual into a state of depression, while those perceived as a challenge are usually responded to with hope and expectation, leading to the release of energy for problem-solving.

There are a number of ways in which individuals attempt to resolve the problems created by the hazardous event. Those who respond with anxiety or depression may find themselves powerless to attempt any new coping methods, and may therefore ignore these stress symptoms. Such individuals might also attempt to escape these negative feelings through the use of alcohol or other drugs, or find relief by unconsciously converting them into somatic, neurotic or psychotic symptoms. Depressed individuals often express grief in words or actions, while those who become anxious may express anger through verbal or physical aggression. Individuals who respond to the situation with hope will tend to engage in reality-oriented efforts to resolve the problem.[5]

Attempts by an individual at problem resolution usually follow a definite pattern and are accompanied by a rise in the level of tension experienced. At first habitual coping mechanisms are relied upon, but if they are ineffective, "emergency" methods of coping are utilized. In most instances, the problem situation is resolved at this point and a crisis is averted, but if direct attempts to resolve the problem are ineffective and efforts to ignore it are also ineffective, the level of tension within the individual continues to rise at an accelerated pace. The person becomes increasingly upset as his or her efforts to cope become progressively more ineffective. At the point where an individual's coping mechanisms have been stretched beyond their limit, any further stressful event converts the vulnerable state into one of active crisis. In crisis terminology, this event is known as the "precipitating factor". Such an event may be perceived by others as being insignificant, even though it is experienced by the individual as the "last straw". The person becomes overwhelmed, his or her coping mechanisms inoperative. The individual enters into a state of crisis, and disorganization sets in.[6] Individuals either become completely immobilized or engage in aimless activity in a desperate attempt to discharge inner tension. Emotionally, they experience anxiety and strong feelings of shame, guilt and uneasiness. On the cognitive level, they have great difficulty conceptualizing their situation and they literally do not know what steps must be taken to rectify it. They feel helpless, facing what they regard as an insoluble problem.

This state of crisis, however, is not necessarily indicative of pathology, but it is evidence of an internal struggle as attempts are made to resolve the problem that has overtaxed personal resources and that requires the use of skills not available for its resolution. All crises have growth-producing potential in the sense that, if an individual can increase adaptive skills, a return to at least the pre-crisis level of functioning is possible. The state of crisis is time-limited, usually lasting four to eight weeks, after which the crisis apparently comes to some point of resolution, for ill or good. Post-crisis functioning, therefore, depends to a large extent on how the crisis was resolved.[7]

During the state of active crisis, the defense mechanisms of the system affected become weakened. Therefore when individuals and families are in crisis and experiencing a great deal of pain and discomfort from which they wish to be relieved, they become much more open to the influence of others. Motivation to accept help and to change is at its peak. As the crisis subsides, however, and less pain is experienced, defenses are once again strengthened and individuals or families become less open to the influence of others and less motivated to change. Crisis resolution that produces growth rather than pathology necessitates that an individual has the opportunity to:

- gain the knowledge needed to get a realistic perception of his or her situation;
- become aware of affective states and learn to manage them;
- develop a pattern of seeking and using the help that will enable the performance of psycho-social tasks necessary for crisis resolution.

Unless individuals or families are able to manage crisis effectively their level of adjustment is likely to be in the direction of pathology, making them more crisis prone. These people often become clients of social agencies. Many West Indian clients are likely to have had, or will be having, difficulty in managing what can be conceptualized as "the crisis of migration". It is therefore important that helping persons who work with West Indian families or individuals develop an understanding of exactly what is involved in the structure and process of migration, and the ways in which aspects of migration can precipitate a state of crisis in individuals. The following section highlights some aspects of this phenomenon.

Hazardous Events and the State of Vulnerability

The nations within the Caribbean region are currently in the flux of transition. Many have only recently become politically independent. While Caribbean territories were colonies, their affairs were conducted in the interest of colonial powers. For example, in the sphere of economics and industry, the colonies were not helped to establish self-sufficient and self-sustaining systems. Instead they were used as sources of cheap raw materials for European industries, which processed and sold the finished products. In turn, surplus goods were shipped back to the colonies and sold at prices as high as the market would bear. This arrangement provided jobs for Europeans but in the West Indies unemployment was extremely high.[8]

With independence* came the difficult task of building nations in which the interests of the nationals would be served, not those of European countries. This was an extremely difficult task within the framework of dependency, which had been imposed on the Caribbean during the colonial era. Efforts to change, therefore, had to be made. Since change is often a slow and tedious process, however, systems that are in equilibrium do not lend themselves readily to this process, especially when the resources are limited.

Within the framework of crisis theory, independence can be conceptualized as a hazardous event, since it precipitated socio-political transition. This transition taxed the coping abilities of newly-independent nations, leaving them vulnerable to further hazardous events and a state of crisis manifested in limited resources, large-scale unemployment, political uncertainty and continued dependence on external resources.[9]

The crisis, and the steps taken to resolve it, affected individual citizens and families of all classes. Some lower class individuals who were unable to find employment through regular channels developed creative means of earning a livelihood by organizing small agricultural or handcraft cooperatives or other innovative methods. Others hit hard by poverty resorted to crime or begging, or developed serious psychiatric problems.[10] Among the middle class, some individuals found they were unable to import raw materials and luxury goods needed for the operation of their enterprises so tried to find new and creative ways of using local raw materials. Others became depressed and withdrawn, developing somatic or psychological complaints.

As early as the later 1940s, West Indians (particularly members of the lower class) coped with the severe social and economic stresses in the colonies by migrating to other countries, which they perceived as having more opportunities. During the 1970s the various governments began to impose stringent economic measures and the middle class began to migrate in increasingly large numbers.

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*Jamaica in August 1962; Trinidad in August 1962; Guyana in May 1966; Barbados in November 1966.

Possible Precipitating Factors

When people migrate they do so with certain expectations of what their new environment will hold for them. These expectations are, all too often, totally unrealistic in terms of what they will find.[11] The Caribbean has had a long association with the western world and there are many attractive advertisements of expensive consumer goods in the Caribbean media. Therefore many Caribbean people have developed a desire for these goods that are associated with North American society.[12]

Guided by this materialistic view of North America, some immigrant West Indians (especially those with limited formal education) fail to recognize that there are many differences between North America and the lands from which they have come. A great many West Indians, prior to migration, have some intellectual awareness of the physical differences between the Caribbean and Canada and that, implicit in these, there will be new situations and experiences. Awareness of the demands essential to the process of adjustment, however, must await actual experience.[13]

Too often, only at the moment of arrival in Canada do West Indians begin to recognize that there are vast differences between this country and their homelands, differences applicable to every sphere of life. The width of the roads, the size and height of the buildings, and the extensiveness of urban areas, leave them feeling overwhelmed. Depending on the time of year during which a West Indian arrives in Canada, he or she is immediately confronted with differences not just in climate, but in the lengths of daylight and night-time. It is "shocking" to experience the shorter daylight hours of fall and winter, and the reverse in summer. Even the concept of time takes on new meaning for West Indians as they move from a developing nation into a highly technologized society. These immediate perceptions trigger the awareness that an almost total change in "mind set" is necessary for adaptation. Having arrived in Canada, many soon realize that some of their expectations were unrealistic, and this awareness itself can precipitate problems of predictable types.

Environmental Adaptation

Climate West Indians, migrating to Canada, come from areas where there is perpetual summer. For many, the change in climate presents a major obstacle to, and difficulty in, their adjustment.[14] The harshest climatic condition in the West Indies is the hurricane and heavy rainfall seasons. Therefore, for West Indians, winter blizzards and cold seem especially vicious. Due to inadequate public transportation and the lack of private transportation for the poor in the Caribbean, people are not generally expected to leave their homes during harsh weather conditions. Absenteeism at such time is therefore not a major problem. But in Canada one is expected to venture forth in virtually all kinds of weather. For protection against the elements, one must wear multiple layers of clothing. This is not only tiresome and sometimes uncomfortable, but also expensive. Winter months also mean more "indoor" living, as opposed to the "outdoor" living in the Caribbean. Soon, West Indians in Canada may begin to feel "cooped up".[15] Children seem to be more adaptable and more willing to participate in Canadian winter outdoor activities. For many adults, however, winter conditions pose a severe obstacle to adjustment. During winter, Caribbean immigrant adults tend to restrict themselves only to essential outdoor ventures; this begins the process of isolation from social contact.

Canadian climatic conditions thus have significant implications for West Indians. These conditions necessitate a drastic change in attitude at a physical and emotional level, and must be accompanied by the acquisition of new coping skills to aid in adaptation. The different levels of acceptance of climatic conditions between parents and children is one of the many factors indicative of the difference in the rate of their acculturation.[16]

Housing For most West Indians arriving in Canada, apartment living is general. Although in recent years this kind of accommodation has been developed in some Caribbean territories, apartment buildings are not the skyscrapers that exist in North America. While apartment living is commonplace for a large percent of the North American population, this is so for only a very small percent of the population in the West Indies. Apartment living is therefore a new and dramatic experience for most West Indians in Canada. Even the manner in which apartments are identified can create confusion, e.g. 120, 220, 320, with the first digit representing the floor. Like the climate, apartment living necessitates extensive social adjustment. For many, it means generally a shift from home ownership to paying rent.

Traditionally, home occupancy in the West Indies does not involve rigid legal and social restrictions. This allows for more freedom with regard to visitors: laughter, music, parties, domino games and a consequently higher level of noise. In Canada, however, apartment living is, on the whole, impersonal. There are strict rules of occupancy with regard to family size, age and sexual distribution in terms of children sharing rooms, and noise. The traditional West Indian lifestyle (which maintained social contacts, friendships and potential emotional supports) must therefore change to accord with Canadian social norms. Apartment living is particularly problematic where there are children. The absence of readily accessible, individual fenced yard space, creates difficulty for parents in giving adequate supervision to children at play. In the Caribbean, children play freely in the yard, and parents or neighbours are able to keep an eye on them from the house. Here in Canada, apartment living means, on the one hand, that parents must accompany small children outdoors for play or be in violation of the Child Welfare Act. On the other hand, if children play indoors, the family will be in violation of occupancy rules with regard to noise.

Apartment living, therefore, creates further specific psycho-social problems. Living in rented accommodation means that feelings of territoriality, ownership and autonomy are lost. The life-style adds to the problems of alienation and loneliness for West Indians, particularly single women. Parents and children often exist in a state of tension, caught between conflicting needs and expectations.

Work The West Indian is familiar with, and well indoctrinated into, the Protestant work ethic, but the way North Americans carry out this ethic is yet another phenomenon demanding adjustment. Due to the hot climate in the West Indies and the lack of air conditioning and other modern mechanisms in some places of work, the pace of life is slow in comparison to life in North America. Here in Canada, organizations operate at a higher level of efficiency and with higher standards of expectations. Therefore, for job security, West Indian immigrants must learn to perform at a higher level of efficiency than was demanded in their native lands. They must arrive at work punctually regardless of weather conditions and they must meet output expectations.

Those with limited formal education and unmarketable skills must spend long hours doing strenuous factory labour. In the Caribbean, such individuals would have been involved in "scuffling", small farming (see chapter II), or would have worked in a small factory or on construction, where their employers would have known them and possibly their immediate families. In the Caribbean locale, the employer provides wages as well as other economic and psycho-social supports for employees. There are also situations in which those with limited formal education acquire high-level skills on the job, thereby improving their employment potential. Unfortunately, diplomas are not issued for these accomplishments and, when individuals migrate, this creates credential problems. For West Indians with officially certified skills, adjustment to the new work environment is eased by virtue of their education, which helps them to understand and work within the parameters of the very formal and sophisticated systems here. Although the concept of work has much the same meaning for West Indians as it does for North Americans, the differences in work habits and expectations are cues to which the West Indian in Canada must adapt. Traditionally, the relationship between employer and employee had, for many, the features of a mutually supportive system which established a meaningful bond of caring. The loss of this in the Canadian work situation becomes a critical issue and relates to feelings of job security and job performance.

Money Since many West Indians have a materialistic view of North America, they therefore expect to acquire "goods" very shortly after arriving in Canada. This is particularly true of individuals from the low income group. They soon realize, however, that the many attractive goods advertised are not as easily owned as was expected. In some cases, individuals are receiving a steady income for the first time. While this income is higher than they would have received in the West Indies, so are their expenses. The relative ease with which one can obtain credit in North America is a new experience for many West Indians. As a result of the interacting variables of income and expense, the desire to amass material goods, and the easy access to credit, many West Indians soon find themselves in serious financial straits. It is therefore not unusual to find individuals working at two or three jobs to earn the payments for excessive credit.

This situation demands further adjustment. In the West Indies, as in other developing nations, most people have high self-sufficiency in meeting the needs of everyday life. Goods and services are not always purchased from establishments, and individuals learn through necessity to be inventive. Therefore, while money is important, the meeting of material needs there does not necessarily imply an exchange of money. Living in Canada, the opportunity to be self-sufficient to the same degree is lost, resulting in feelings of helplessness, ironically tied in with the newly acquired feelings of power in the opportunity to buy via cash or credit.

Recreation There is a significant variation between leisure activities in the West Indies and those in Canada. Due to poverty, individuals in the West Indies are again, of necessity, more inventive in their recreational activities. Also, because of the balmy climatic conditions, most of those activities are outdoor parties. Engaging in leisure activities is generally spontaneous, inexpensive, and takes place the year round. Many Canadian leisure activities are seasonal, necessitating considerable planning and expense. Summer leisure can be readily utilized with familiar pastimes, but in winter these must be curtailed. For adults this means limited recreational outlets; children, though, adapt to cold weather conditions more readily and engage in winter outdoor activities.

Church Church membership and regular attendance is a highly significant aspect of life in the Caribbean. The church as an institution is always given a position of importance. Many social and educational activities are organized and maintained by the church and therefore it functions as a meaningful support system for the community. The minister, generally, is a central figure who is accorded high status and is a resource person in varying capacities. He may be consulted for psycho-social problems, may be the arbitrator in any kind of dispute, may act as a school teacher, officiate at civic and other social functions, or act as an advocate.

In Canada, many West Indians perceive the church as being distant, formalized and forbidding. They are therefore reluctant to make membership commitment. Ministers are seen as fulfiling their office in a "clinical" fashion and their contact with congregations seems restricted. Church attendance for many West Indians and its significance as an institution therefore become considerably less meaningful. As a result, a significant support system and resource is lost to West Indian immigrants, and feelings of alienation are exacerbated.

Alienation from Support Systems Alienation from the traditional support systems has widespread implications for immigrants. When there is no system for "bridging the gap" during the period of transition, and when there is a lack of innate skills that would ease the process of adjustment to a new society, West Indians' psycho-social problems, arising from the adjustment process, are compounded.

For the West Indian whose family can be described as "extended", moving into a society where the family is for the most part nuclear, this process of adjustment is particularly difficult. In the Caribbean there are very close family and friendship ties that provide material as well as emotional support; church, friends, employer and employee are all part of this helping network. Since social agencies as they exist in North America are relatively nonexistent in the Caribbean, it is the informal helping network that is resorted to first for problem resolution. West Indian immigrants recognize the loss of this familiar support and find that they must face and deal with problems alone, or adapt to the North American mode of seeking help from highly structured, formal social service systems.

The ability to cope and work within these formal systems depends on the individual's level of education in concert with his or her feelings of confidence and belonging; the formally educated West Indian is better able to cope with these greater systems. Those with limited formal education often find coping with these systems a formidable and frustrating task. Approaching agencies such as Employment and Immigration, schools, medical and legal offices, often gives rise to fear and anxiety, which undermine feelings of confidence and individual worth. In this state the West Indian feels helpless, and if unable to state needs clearly, could elicit varied reactions from staff within these agencies. These reactions may range all the way from excessive patience to suspicion and hostility. In the Caribbean, these seekers of aid would have had the advantage of being assisted by someone from their support network to express their needs. In addition they would have been given a sensitive reception by personnel within the agency, which was flexible in serving individuals.

The feelings of belonging that enable the non-immigrant to seek social services as a "civil right", and to understand and use the systems, are goals on the far social horizon for many West Indians. Until the sense of comfort is attained through increased knowledge and understanding of the social systems, many will remain fearful and alienated.

The State of Active Crisis

The experiences encountered by West Indians, as they attempt to cope in terms of the foregoing seven factors during the process of adjustment, can give rise to problems that are not necessarily indicative of pathology. Coping with these problems can either facilitate the development of adaptive skills and produce social and personal growth or be inhibitive, resulting in no growth or even regression.

Some individuals and families find the experiences of migration fruitfully challenging: new energy is released for problem solving, obstacles are overcome and the over-all level of their functioning is increased. Many adults and children respond to this challenge by acquiring new skills and therefore become better able to achieve further adaptation. Some conjugal unions are strengthened by the pressure of meeting the challenges as partners, and each person becomes more supportive of the other.

Many families, however, experience difficulties with the same challenges and need to avail themselves of counselling or become the focus of intervention by social agencies. Such families are often able to effectively use whatever help they are given for problem resolution and by this to move on to a better level of functioning.

There are still other families who are exposed to an unprecedented magnitude of stress during this period of transition, in combination with cultural and other reasons (including social class origin) but who resist seeking help when they find their coping mechanisms taxed to the limit. It is these families who are thrust into a state of active crisis.

The discussion that follows focuses on the psycho-social issues that may precipitate a state of crisis. These issues relate to patterns of migration, minority status and racism, sex, age and marital status.

Patterns of Migration

During the 1950s until 1967, the West Indians migrating to Canada fell into three main categories: university students; professionals and their sponsored relatives; women who came on the "Domestic Scheme".* Individuals in the first two categories were mainly from the middle income group, as were some in the third category. Even those from the low income group on the Domestic Scheme, had to possess certain educational and social skills that would help them to live and work in the new society. Prior to 1967, West Indians, like other non-white groups, were severely restricted in being permitted to migrate to Canada. The introduction of the non-discriminatory "point system" in 1967 allowed for a large influx of West Indians, many of whom were less skilled. Prior to the introduction of this "point system", West Indians, unlike the Italians and Greeks, were predominantly employed in "white collar" occupations: over 40 per cent were in clerical, professional or managerial occupations.[17]

Although patterns of migration vary between low and middle income groups there are also some similarities as demonstrated below:

A. One spouse, male or female, arrives first, establishes employment and residence, then is joined by the other family members in a relatively short period.

B. Both spouses arrive first, become established and then send for their children, also in a short period.

C. Spouses and their children arrive together.

D. One spouse comes to attend university; once graduated and established, he or she is joined by the other family members, after an extended period.

E. Single mother arrives first, establishes herself and then sends for her children, also after an extended period. This is the general trend among the low income group.[18]

Although the psycho-social problems of separation are inherent in all typologies but C, families in patterns D and E are more prone to such problems, due to the length of separation. For the low income single mother, it may take many years until it is economically feasible to be reunited with her children. (This will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.) The university student also needs years to complete his or her course of study and become established. This situation has the potential to create very severe problems, and depending on the coping skills of the individuals involved, could result in the crisis of family disintegration.

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*These women contracted to work for a minimum of one year as domestics. They were granted landed immigrant status on arrival in Canada, and at the end of their year's contract they were free to go their own way.

The following case demonstrates some of the issues of migration stress suggested.

Mr. B., age 30, bookkeeper; Mrs. B., age 28, registered nurse; Boy, age 7 years; Girl, age 3 years. Prior to Mr. B.'s migration in 1971 to attend a Canadian university, he and his family lived in a rented bungalow in a suburban middle class area. After his departure from the Caribbean, Mrs. B. and the children went to live with Mr. B.'s parents, who owned a large home. The agreement was that Mrs. B. and the children would join Mr. B. in Canada five years later. Although Mrs. B. missed her husband, she was better able to cope with this separation than was her husband, since she had many relatives and friends for emotional support and continued to live in a familiar environment. For Mr. B., the situation was drastically different. Arriving in Canada, he was faced with loneliness, alienation, many situations which demanded adjustment, in addition to coping with school. With financial assistance from his wife and parents as well as his part-time employment, he was able to rent a comfortable flat. Being unaccustomed to this solitary style of life and the demands of housekeeping, he entered into an extramarital relationship. This met his need for companionship as well as general social and household assistance. Over the years this relationship became increasingly more meaningful, but at the same time created inner conflict for Mr. B. concerning his marriage to Mrs. B. He was quite successful in school, obtained a good engineering position, and prepared for reunion with his family whom he had seen only once in six years. Shortly after reunion, Mr. and Mrs. B. began to experience difficulty in their relationship. While Mr. B. had made his acculturative adjustments to the Canadian social values, structures and processes, Mrs. B. and the children were just beginning this process. In addition, there was ongoing internal conflict in Mr. B. with regard to his extramarital relationship. The tensions in the family were compounded by additional problems.

Mrs. B. and the children were very excited at the prospect of reunion with Mr. B. in Canada. The first three months after their arrival were indeed exciting as the B.'s were involved in re-establishing family relationships. Mr. B. had spent the first three weeks (his vacation) in taking his family on sightseeing tours, introducing them to his friends and acquaintances and giving them a general orientation to the community in which they lived.

Mrs. B. found employment as a registered nurse; the boy was registered in school, and baby-sitting arrangements were made for both children. The family settled into their daily routines with the minimum of difficulty. This was not to last, however. Mrs. B.'s initial impression was that apartment living with its compact conveniences would make household management quite easy for her. But she soon became conscious of its restrictiveness in terms of space, and recognized that her familiar style of house management had to be adapted to the new style of residence.

She attempted to do the daily cleaning as was the custom in the Caribbean where there was hired help to perform such tasks. After a day's work, she was extremely tired from the demands of adjustment to her new work environment, travelling long distances to and from work and meeting the deadline for picking up the children from the sitter. As a result of trying to meet all these demands as a "good wife" should, she became increasingly exhausted. She needed help but was reluctant to request such help from her husband. ("Household management is woman's business" — in the Caribbean context.) She also resented the fact that Mr. B. did not volunteer to help. Hence she was in a state of conflict.

Due to Mrs. B.'s concern about being the good housewife, her time with the children was limited. Mr. B. did not see it as his role to take the children out to play. He found it difficult coping with the children after having lived on his own for so many years. Therefore the children played in the apartment, creating problems for the family with regard to noise. Mrs. B. realized that being actively involved with the children while they played would be a new and added demand. In the Caribbean, where there was fenced yard space, the children played by themselves or with peers outdoors, supervised by hired help. These demands on Mrs. B. resulted in tension and anxiety which were manifested in headaches. She consulted a doctor who was unable to find a physical cause for the headaches and suggested that she see a counsellor, but she refused.

Mrs. B. began to withdraw from social occasions but encouraged her husband to go out without her. This arrangement resulted in Mr. B. renewing his extramarital relationship, which he had terminated shortly before his wife arrived from the Caribbean.

Since Mrs. B. was always exhausted or complaining of a headache, her husband's evenings away from home became more frequent and on each occasion he returned home later. His wife's complaints about his frequent absences from home resulted in fierce arguments which only served to increase the tensions in the home.

After a year of unresolved conflicts and increasing tension, Mrs. B. made efforts to change this situation. These, however, proved futile. Feeling helpless, she attempted to threaten her husband by seeking legal advice about separation. The lawyer, recognizing that Mrs. B. was not yet ready to make this decision, suggested that she seek family counselling. When Mrs. B. approached her husband with the action she had taken and requested that they both seek professional help, he moved out in a fit of anger, leaving her and the children.

Mrs. B., however, contacted the Family Service Association. With the help of a counsellor she gained some insight into her situation, knowledge about community resources and support in her coping as a single parent. At the time of writing, Mrs. B. continues to be involved in counselling and is still making efforts to involve her husband in the process, with the hope of reconciliation.

Minority Status and Racism

Black West Indians in Canada experience minority status for the first time. In the Caribbean they were the majority group. This majority position confers on each individual a certain sense of security, which is lost in Canada. Coping with this new status in an unfamiliar environment, where Blackness has been traditionally associated with negative stereotypes, can be exceedingly traumatic for the individual. The West Indian in Canada finds that colour of skin presents problems in many transactions with non-Blacks.

Colonialism, and its attendant oppression of Blacks in the Caribbean, created a situation in which complexion and socio-economic status have traditionally been highly correlated. However, West Indians in their native lands have not been exposed to the same kind or degree of racially-biased situations that so many experience in North America.[19] It is a totally new and shocking experience for the West Indian to discover that housing, employment and services can be denied the individual purely on the basis of skin colour. Such an experience is understandably indeed traumatic. It is a threat to one's very core of being. When coupled with feelings of insecurity due to one's being new in an alien environment, the situation can result in an identity crisis. If this remains unresolved, further psychological problems will arise. The individual's ability to cope with this phenomenon is crucial to his or her mental health and continued adjustment.

Many non-Blacks react to the issue of racism with horror and denial.

The existence of racism is a reality in Canada, however.[20] It is institutionalized and expressed very subtly on the interpersonal level. This is a learned attitude of which an individual may not be conscious. It thus is crucial that non-Blacks working with West Indians be aware that racism exists in Canada. Sensitivity in relation to the issue of racism is essential to working effectively and sincerely with Black West Indians. Denial of racism constitutes a block in working to eliminate a destructive situation which inhibits the personal and collective growth of its victims and prevents their useful contribution to developing a Black Community, even their contributing to the community at large.[21] The Black West Indian who is the object of racist attitudes and behaviours often feels powerless while attempting to cope with all the previously mentioned variables in the process of adaption to the new environment. When, in addition, the problem situation is seen as something one can never change — skin colour — the individual is all the more vulnerable to active crisis.

Age, Sex and Marital Status

Adult Males For some middle or upper status West Indian males, migrating to Canada often means an immediate lowering of status. While the individual may adapt more readily to the loss of status in residence and other symbols of his social class, coping with a loss in job status is particularly difficult. Living in a still male-dominated society, an immigrant male faces a greater challenge in meeting role expectations. If he has experienced a lowering of job status, however, he finds it difficult to meet these expectations and may feel a sense of failure and defeat.[22] Furthermore if such an individual is denied promotions and other opportunities for advancement, his problem is compounded and may result in feelings of frustration, withdrawal, depression, the overt and covert expressions of anger and/or varying degrees of paranoia. Unable to vent these feelings on the individual or institution at fault, he could project them on to targets he perceives as less threatening. He might resort to alcohol, gambling, extensive use of credit, involvement with many women, and neglect of responsibilities as husband and parent, if he is married.

Migration to Canada for many low status West Indian males is perceived by them as an exciting adventure. While they do not experience a similar loss of social class status, they often suffer the loss of familiar surroundings, recognition by neighbours and in some instances, a lowering of job status. As mentioned earlier in the section on work, some have acquired high level skills on the job but lack formal evidence of this. Even when he has formal proof he is very often denied the opportunity to be employed on the basis of these skills because he is usually told "he lacks Canadian experience".[23] Moreover, those with limited formal education, social and English language skills may find it difficult to operate within the parameters of the highly formal and impersonal work situation. The inability to communicate clearly and effectively with peers and supervisors, together with the pressure of job expectations, gives rise to feelings of fear, anxiety and frustration creating generalized feelings of insecurity. Such individuals are sometimes the only Black employee in the place of work, and often become the object of ridicule and discrimination, which further compounds feelings of insecurity.

This situation undermines the individual's self-worth, leading to hurt, anger, depression and oftentimes paranoia. Lower status males faced with this situation can react in the same manner as middle and upper income males, resorting to gambling, alcohol and credit abuse, involvement with many women and neglect of responsibilities. These "acting out" behaviours can alleviate some sources of stress, but simultaneously have the effect of creating stress in other aspects. For the married man it very often means tension within the home and danger of family disintegration. Furthermore, some of these behaviours serve to reinforce the many myths and stereotypes of the black male, particularly in the area of male/female relationships and more widely in terms of reckless social behaviour.[24] It needs only to be mentioned that any or all of these patterns of stress are also common presenting problems in the counselling agencies.

Adult Females Middle of upper income West Indian females superficially can appear to have less difficulty in adjusting to Canada. On closer examination, however, they also experience difficulties. Coming from a matriarchal society, they are basically ambitious and aggressive and have had formal education. Since the jobs for which they are qualified are traditionally "female oriented" they do not present a threat to the white male dominant group and therefore usually obtain employment more readily than West Indian males. Even though they also experience a loss in social status and in some instances job status, the psycho-social implications are not as severe as they are for their male counterparts, since women are not faced with as great a challenge in meeting role expectations. Though racism and the lack of opportunities for advancement on the job are equally devastating, unlike the male, their outlets for frustration are much more constrained. Having been brought up with rigid Victorian attitudes about behaviour appropriate for females, they are not likely to engage in the same kind of "acting out" behaviours as males. Unable to act out frustrations, feelings are internalized and many develop psychosomatic symptoms.

Low status West Indian females, like their male counterparts, perceive migration to Canada as an exciting adventure holding promise of fantastic opportunities, but their losses are similar to males. As is the case with middle status females, there are more employment opportunities for low status West Indian females than for their male counterparts. Women's experiences on the job, however, are quite similar to males, but again the opportunities for the outlet of frustrations are limited. Feelings of frustration are compounded for those lacking adequate English-language skills since it is difficult for these individuals to verbalize their feelings.

Because employment is more readily available to West Indian females than males, this creates stress for some couples and comprises a further dimension in the exacerbation of marital stresses. Married women from either socio-economic group who recognize that, in Canada, there are viable structures for the protection of women and children, often attempt to use these for problem resolution when marital difficulties arise. Their old habit of subtle and indirect manipulation may give way to more open "fighting". Fear of loneliness, however, and carrying alone the burdens of household and child rearing, compound her conflict.

West Indian women from both socio-economic groups in Canada are faced with the reality of very demanding role functions in the home. In the Caribbean the home management and child rearing functions are usually shared with hired help, neighbours, friends or relatives. Here in Canada women assume sole responsibility for these tasks. For married women who work full time, this can be one more source from which marital conflict arises, since, traditionally, West Indian males are not, by and large, involved in domestic chores. Single mothers who also work find these situations even more stress producing.

The not-married females also find household management an increased demand on their energies. But even though this situation is tiresome, the performance of household chores can often be a means of coping with the drastic problems of loneliness and alienation. Among this group of West Indians, loneliness and alienation are particularly problematic. Harnessed by a "Victorian" upbringing, they find little opportunity for social activities with either men or other women. Such extreme loneliness, coupled with other difficulties in the process of adaptation and acculturation, often gives rise to withdrawal, depression or psychosomatic symptoms, which makes them even more vulnerable to crisis. Females from any status, whose coping mechanisms become overtaxed, place as high a value on privacy as males but are more likely to seek professional help from a variety of resources in the community.

Children In recent years there has been a huge spate of publications devoted to the adjustment of West Indian children to school systems in Britain and Canada. But very little has been written on the severe emotional difficulties many children experience due to the often lengthy parent/child separations or other family dynamics. In this section we present our research findings on this aspect relevant to those in social agencies and other organizations, including schools. The purpose here is to sensitize professionals to the kinds of situations that are most challenging and sometimes problematic for these children (and their parents) as they attempt to adjust to the Canadian milieu. The issue of separation and reunion is extremely complex. It is a phenomenon exclusive to West Indian patterns of migration, and can be disruptive to families in the process of adjustment.

Many middle and upper status families migrate together, or after only a relatively short period of separation (except for the university student who is a spouse and parent). For low status families, periods of separation are usually lengthy, varying from one to 15 years. Hence children left in the West Indies as infants or toddlers may be in late childhood or adolescence before reunion with their parents takes place. The children have by then bonded with the surrogate parent and may have come to believe that they were abandoned by their natural parents as a form of punishment or because they were disliked.[25] It is not surprising that children hold these opinions of their situation since, in most instances, no one has discussed what are considered to be adult concerns with them. All that is expected of West Indian children is strict obedience to adult prescriptions at all times. Therefore children have little or no say in matters that affect their personal lives. "Children are *seen* and not *heard*."

West Indian children's adjustment to the new society is also dependent on a host of variables similar to those faced by their parents. Like their parents, many are successful at adjustment. Unfortunately there are large numbers of these children who are experiencing severe difficulties that impede their adjustment. It is critical to recognize that the majority of problems presented in the counselling situations we studied are related to separation. We also found that those experiencing the greatest difficulties around separation are from low status families. Most of these families have been referred to the agency by schools, health services, Children's Aid Societies or the police, who have identified some kind of "acting out behaviour" by the children.

What has led up to this "acting out"? The first significant factor we can trace is children's inability to cope with the totally new and rather alien environment — climatic, physical and social — plus the exacerbation of this situation by seven other kinds of forces which we consider in detail:

The Child's Perception of Separation

Most children have never been told why their parents left them behind in the West Indies. One can assume therefore that they have made their own interpretations which, however, are oftentimes false. In some instances children have been given false explanations by well-meaning surrogate parents intent on maintaining the child's attachment to them. Hence children become resentful of their natural parents.

Children's Situation After Parents' Departure

Some children have experienced multiple separations by the time they are finally reunited with their parents. For children who lived with their natural mother or parents prior to parental migration, children's negative reactions to this loss would be labeled "bad" or "rude" by the surrogate parent. To correct this behaviour, the surrogate parent would most likely resort to "spanking" or other forms of punishment. If this did not correct the problem, children might be moved on to another family. Children are also moved from family to family when problems related to health or financial need arise. If children have lived with a grandmother or another surrogate parent since birth, reactions to mothers' departure are not particularly significant, since such children have never bonded with their natural mothers. Another important factor is that sometimes it is not possible for all of one's children to be left in the care of the same guardian. In cases where children have been fathered by different men, they are sometimes left with their individual fathers or their paternal grandmothers and may not see one another again until reunion with their mother in Canada.

School Attendance

In Chapter II we discussed the importance adults place on education and the great encouragement that parents of all social strata place on the academic achievement of their children. Though school attendance in the Caribbean is compulsory, unfortunately there are many children whose school attendance is so irregular that they benefit very little from it. This situation exists particularly in Jamaica where a vast population explosion over the past 20 years has made it very difficult for school facilities to keep abreast of the need. Consequently there are facilities for only 60 per cent of school-aged children there.[26]

In many instances, guardians (particularly those with limited formal education) are unaware of the important link between academic achievement and regular school attendance; they therefore do not assure that children are, in fact, attending school when they leave home in the mornings. Children are also kept out of school to do a variety of chores. These children are therefore at a great disadvantage when they migrate to Canada.

Length of Separation

When parents migrate, leaving their children behind, it is with the hope of a speedy reunion in Canada, where all will have better opportunities. Instead, unfortunately, many parents in this situation find that it takes a very long time to establish themselves here. For couples, this process can be economically hastened somewhat by both working, but for single mothers it is extremely difficult. They must not only support themselves but also send money to support children back in the Caribbean, while trying to save sufficient funds to enable reunion. Hence, the separation stretches into a quite lengthy duration. Some single mothers will sponsor the father of one or all of her children in the hope that together they can financially speed the process.

Reunion

When reunion does take place it is usually because parents assess that they are sufficiently established to enable the move. But there are instances when reunion must occur prematurely due to a breakdown in the arrangements back in the Caribbean. In the first instance, parents have usually gone to great lengths to make material preparations for the arrival of their children: new clothing, new furniture, etc. In both instances, however, most parents are in reality psychologically unprepared. They are, for the most part, totally unaware of the psychological effects of either separation and reunion on their children, or what will actually be involved in children's as well as familial adjustments. Parents who have by this time made painful adaptations to the Canadian host society and have established a new life-style, find that the arrival of their children presents even further adjustments for which they had not previously been prepared.

Children leaving the Caribbean are usually excited by this new adventure. But, like parents, they too are unprepared for this dislocation. Their opinions as to this move are not solicited. They are expected to happily do as they are told, and their preparation usually takes the form of admonitions to be "good" so they can best take advantage of the many opportunities in the new country. This is well demonstrated in the film "Be A Good Boy Now".[27]

When children arrive in Canada, they have left behind all that is familiar, sometimes including siblings who will arrive at a later date. The children are met by parents who are in effect strangers, and sometimes by a new step-parent and siblings born in Canada. For the first time these children experience apartment living, a form of residence drastically different from their Caribbean life. Another first is the fact that parents may work long hours, with no grandmothers, other relatives or neighbours to substitute for parents. There is very little opportunity for parents and children to become reacquainted and establish meaningful relationships.

Many children in this situation understandably become extremely anxious and resentful. They feel "cheated" by their parents, but unable to verbalize their feelings of trauma. Instead they "act out" in various ways. Parents' expectations are that the newly-arrived children will automatically fit into the family, be able to show affection for other family members, as well as appreciate the many sacrifices made to allow them this wonderful opportunity in Canada. Therefore when the child becomes withdrawn or behaves in other unexpected ways that cause problematic family transactions, parents readily become frustrated and react with anger, often blaming the newly-arrived child for family disruptions. This parental reaction makes children all the more anxious and many develop further behaviour problems — stealing, lying, truancy, as well as running away from home. At this point, unable to understand what is happening, the parents resort to spanking or other forms of corporal punishment, which children perceive as further rejection. In this way parents and children become snared in a vicious circle of action-reaction, ill-suited to children's integration into functional family units.

The phenomenon of reunion is indeed traumatic for all children, and particularly so for adolescents. They, in most instances, have had the longest period of separation, having established very strong ties with their surrogate parent, if they have not been moved from family to family in the West Indies prior to reunion. They are also at a developmental stage that demands adjustment to rapid physical and emotional changes. Suddenly they are thrust into a situation that demands further major adjustments. Identity for the individual in this group is a major problem. They have not yet completed the process of self-definition, do not identify with members in the new family constellations and most certainly do not identify with the new Canadian community. In short, they are confused and lost.

The conflicts between the newly-arrived adolescent and their parents are severe. One of the major problems is parents' inability to cope with children who are "suddenly" near-adults. Many low status mothers had these children in their own mid-teens. Therefore, when reunited, such mothers are still fairly young women. It is not unusual to find that these women are embarrassed, introducing their newly-arrived adolescents to others as a niece, nephew, brother or sister. Mothers, of course, are unaware that adolescents perceive this as rejection, further alienating them.

If there are men in the mothers' lives (new husbands or boyfriends) the conflicts are compounded. Mother might have expended great effort to find a partner, and now, consciously or unconsciously, fears that her "man" will find her adolescent daughter appealing. The daughter then becomes a real or imagined threat. These fears are exacerbated by the fact that there have been some covert sexual encounters between adolescent girls and their mother's partner. It is not difficult to understand why such situations arise, since "step-parents" are not generally allowed to parent their "step-children".

Another area that presents problems is adolescents' attempts at independence. In most cases, assertiveness on the part of adolescents is perceived by parents as "rudeness" and is met with disapproval, usually accompanied by physical punishment, particularly for girls. Boys at this age usually escape physical punishment, especially if there is no man in the family or where the man is his step-father, but it is not unusual for scapegoating to take place when mother sees in her male child a resemblance to his father who might have hurt and rejected her.

When parents, particularly single mothers, feel they have lost control and can no longer cope, they often call the Children's Aid Societies to "put the child (under 16 years old) in a home". The child over 16 years old may be turned out of the parental home. In a six-month period between November 1978 and April 1979, 17 girls over age 16 contacted Family Service Association because they had been banished from their parents' homes due to sexual encounters with mother's partner, and for attempting to assert their rights as individuals. In the same period, six boys over 16 were also put out for attempts at assertiveness.

Discipline

The disciplinary measures taken by some West Indian parents may seem drastic, or might even be labelled abuse by non-West Indians. But it must be remembered that the attitudes towards children and childrearing practices in the Caribbean are different from North American attitudes. The current attitude in North America (that children are a species unto their own with special attributes) is not prevalent in the Caribbean.[28]

Definitions of child abuse are also different in the Caribbean from those in Canada. Welts on a child's skin caused by a spanking is not perceived as abuse there. One does not "spare the rod and spoil the child" in the West Indies. Thus many parents migrating to Canada are unfamiliar with the Canadian Child Welfare Act. Even those who are familiar with it may feel that it robs them of their parental authority and curtails their ability to control the children as "good" parents should. Therefore, West Indian immigrant parents continue to discipline their children in the way that is familiar to them. It must also be remembered that parenting in Canada is much more demanding for West Indians since the traditional support system is lost to them. This is particularly taxing for single parents, who must be both mother and father, providing financial as well as socio-emotional support. They are likely to feel very lonely and perhaps bitter at the thought of being alone with such great responsibilities. For low status mothers, there is the continuous struggle to "make ends meet". Exhausted when they return home from work, they still must do the cooking, housekeeping and childcare, with no help. It is quite easy to understand how such mothers might take out their multiple frustrations on the children and/or give them responsibilities well beyond their years. But when the children are unable to live up to these responsibilities, this is taken as evidence that they are "ungrateful and rude". In turn, the mothers resort to the use of harsh disciplinary methods with the hope of re-establishing control. Children, however, very quickly learn that, in Canada, children are treated differently. In several of the families seen at Family Service Association, parents complained that their children had reported them to the police or the Children's Aid Society for maltreating them.

It is by now clear that adjustment and reunion presents challenges for all families but this adjustment is likely less difficult for middle status families. This is due to shorter periods of separation and the parents' better education, which enables them to more readily understand Canadian values and structures and to have a better understanding of their children's emotional state at this time. Also, children in this group would have been given a better preparation prior to departure from the Caribbean. On arrival in Canada these parents also can better afford the time and resources to give their children a social reorientation. Therefore these children have a slight edge over their low status peers.

The Child in School

In the preceding section we discussed some of the dynamics of separation and reunion for children from the low status West Indian families. These included the great feeling of loss when children leave the West Indies, and the difficulty they have in forming close affectional ties with their parents (or in many cases mother, step-mother, step-father, siblings and half siblings). The discussion also focused on some of the particular difficulties experienced by girls who join their mothers and step-fathers during adolescence and the problematic transactional patterns that develop between family members. More often than not, the child has been in Canada for only a short while and these difficulties have not yet been resolved before the child is thrust into the school environment.[29]

Though most of these children have attended school regularly in the Caribbean, they quickly find that Canadian schools are quite different. Usually the Canadian school is a much larger and more complex institution. Children attending senior public or secondary school here initially find moving from classroom to classroom hopelessly confusing. Children from rural areas find the classes here much larger than those to which they were accustomed. They also find that while their teachers back in the Caribbean lived in the same community as they did, and knew their parents, relatives and friends, their Canadian teachers are strangers to them. Children from both rural and urban West Indian schools find that they are required to enter into completely different relationships with their Canadian teachers. This is due to the fact that West Indian school people are still very authoritarian. Teachers there are in supreme authority in the classrooms. Freedom of expression and open discussion are not encouraged nearly as much as they are in Canada. So the immigrant children find that they are being encouraged to engage in behaviour here that would have been considered "rude" in the West Indies.[30] This egalitarian relationship with adults is also in conflict with their parents' expectations for home behaviour, and therefore leaves them confused.

Many of the children who experience severe difficulties were attending school sporadically prior to arriving in Canada, usually because their parent substitutes did not assure that they attended school regularly. Childen in rural areas often stayed home to help their relatives with agricultural chores, especially during planting and harvesting seasons. Children who were going to schools in some of the depressed urban areas were, unlike the rural children, going to badly overcrowded schools where classrooms had 50 or more children for one teacher. In such situations teachers found it difficult to give each child all the individual attention needed. Therefore there are many West Indian children who have come to Canada with a weak academic background. They therefore find themselves far behind their Canadian classmates, a naturally discouraging and frustrating realization.[31]

Another major obstacle to school adjustment is that of dialect. Many West Indian children are currently growing up with a minimal knowledge of standard English. Consequently when they migrate to Canada they have difficulty understanding teachers, who in turn have difficulty understanding them.[32] These difficult adjustments are compounded by the experience of racial discrimination, subtle or overt, in the school setting. There is a growing body of literature on the discrimination that West Indian children face in the school system, and the way in which the presence of this discrimination makes adjustment all the more problematic for children who might otherwise have been able to adjust eventually.[33]

Children react to these difficulties in many ways. Typically, they are confused and react to this at first by becoming depressed, quiet and withdrawn.[34] Such children may isolate themselves by refusing to participate in activities with other children. In class they do not volunteer any answers and when called upon they either do not answer at all, or answer very softly, usually to say that they do not know the answer. This behaviour probably leads teachers to believe that these children are slow, dull, or even retarded. They are perceived by their classmates as being "weird" and soon become victim to name-calling. At this point, teachers and other professionals may wonder why the parents are not helping the children in their adjustment and may assume that this is due to a lack of parental concern. This is, in most cases, false. Parents are greatly concerned but many find it difficult to be involved for a variety of reasons, and these deserve special attention.

We recognize that the difficulties these children experience in school could be alleviated by parental involvement and that the school is not entirely at fault, but it must be remembered that the low status parents, particularly the single parents, are:

- probably having adjustment problems of their own;
- usually working long hours at strenuous jobs;
- exhausted when they get home;
- likely to have limited formal education;
- unfamiliar with, and intimidated by, the Canadian school;
- unable to help children with their school work;
- embarrassed to visit the teacher due to their own limited formal education;
- expecting the school to take full responsibility for educating their children and not understanding how they could possibly contribute to this process;
- likely to give children considerable household responsibilities;
- unaware of and/or unable to provide the time and privacy children need to do their homework;
- likely afraid to take time off work to visit the school;
- likely to scold or "spank" children when the teacher requests a visit to discuss the children's progress. (In the Caribbean such requests usually meant that the child had been involved in some misdeed, a situation that is a great source of embarrassment for parents.)

Furthermore, in the Caribbean, respect by both parents and children for teachers is well established. Teachers and the school are trusted by parents. In turn, teachers often act, and are expected to act, as substitute parents. Teachers expect their students to perform well in school: to do less would be regarded as practically immoral. West Indian immigrant children find the Canadian school setting cold and alien and consequently deleterious to their achievement in school; furthermore, they perceive the attitude of students toward teachers, especially at the secondary level as disrespectful and distrustful.[35]

We found through our project that parents who gained an understanding of the Canadian school system, and their children's educational needs, do become involved with the children's education.

They also seek resources to help the children if their own education is too limited to help them. There are also parents who are educationally upgrading themselves, not merely for the purpose of upward social mobility but, more importantly, so that they can aid their children with school work.

As many teachers have observed, immigrant West Indian children who are experiencing difficulty in adjustment do not remain quiet and withdrawn. They move from this passive state to frustration, anger and "acting out".[36] This "acting out" usually takes place at school and in the wider community where these children meet other like-situated children. This results in the formation of cliques. In these cliques, children find support, understanding and acceptance and together they engage in various forms of "acting out" behaviour.

The adoption of Rastafarian ideologies (see Chapter II) by some cliques has significance in these children's search for identity. Misunderstanding of this phenomenon and stereotypical thinking on the part of parents, teachers and other professionals, leads to inappropriate intervention, creating further misunderstanding and frustration for the children. Unable to find safe and acceptable outlets for these frustrations, some children are thrust into active crisis.

Summary

From our discussion we can conclude that the experience of migration can precipitate a state of active crisis in some individuals and families. The many changes that are taking place in the Caribbean can be conceptualized as hazardous events which thrust some migrating individuals into a vulnerable state. Many individuals migrate without realizing the changes that will be involved. They have certain perceptions about their new environment but soon discover that these expectations are not in keeping with the reality that awaits them. They miss their Caribbean families and friends and for the first time in their lives they must live independent from the supportive network of extended family, friends and community. Many experience a more violent form of racism than they previously had experienced, usually in employment, housing and social relationships. They find that some behaviours that were acceptable in the West Indies are not acceptable in Canada, and that Canadian laws, particularly concerning school attendance and the welfare of children, are enforced with a different bent and much more stringently here. Some individuals are able to deal with the hazardous events from their migration experience, thereby enhancing their functioning. Others are thrust into a state of crisis. In an attempt to resolve crisis, some individuals develop behaviours that are destructive. Still others react to the hazardous events by developing somatic or psychological complaints. Dysfunctional transactions develop in many families.

For children, the experience of being reunited with a mother and/or father after an extended period of separation, and of entering a school system so different in its operations from the schools to which they were accustomed, can be particularly traumatic. A characteristic response pattern to these experiences can be children becoming depressed and withdrawn initially, and then reacting by "acting out".

Many individuals and families find themselves becoming involved with social agencies because of dysfunctional behaviour patterns either during or following a crisis.

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32. Roth op. cit., Beserve op. cit., L.D. Carrington et al, "Away Robin Run!", 1972, Norma V. Bowen, "Children's Cognitive Development: The Black Child in a Different Culture", in T.E.S.L. Talk, Special Issue, Jan. 1976.
33. Roth op. cit., Bowen op. cit., Beserve op. cit., D'oyley op. cit., Head op. cit., J. Schreiber, "In the Course of Discovery: West Indian Immigrants in Toronto Schools", 1970; Mervyn C. Alleyene, "Dimensions and Varieties of West Indian English and the Implications for Teaching", in T.E.S.L. Talk, special issue, Jan. 1976. See also in the above periodical George W. Bancroft "Possibilities and Problems in the Education of Black Children".
34. Beserve op. cit., daCosta op. cit.
35. Bowen op. cit.
36. ibid. Beserve op. cit., daCosta op. cit., Roth op. cit.

CHAPTER IV

The Helping Professional and the West Indian Client

Within the last five decades, North American society has experienced rapid technological developments and the concomitant urbanization. These changes have given rise to psycho-social issues that impinge on the lives of individuals and families. Informal "helping" networks of the "pre-urbanization era" have been replaced by formal systems designed to "help" individuals and families to cope with the stresses arising from these issues.[1] Social agencies that offer individual and family counselling are one facet of this network, and it is almost the case that the methodology of counselling (as it has developed in North America over the years) has been directed to meeting the need of middle-class Anglo-Saxons. Rapid industrialization in North America has also attracted immigrants from many developing countries where informal helping networks are still very much utilized for problem resolution. Therefore formal helping systems are quite unfamiliar to such immigrants. When they become clients of a social agency, the challenges for the professional are many.

West Indian clients, like many other immigrants seeking help from an agency, are usually faced by professionals who belong to the host culture or a culture other than their own. Even when faced by professionals from their own culture, these professionals have been trained in counselling techniques that are based in urban technology and largely designed to meet the needs of white middle-class Anglo-Saxons. This does not adequately prepare the professional to work within a multicultural milieu.[2]

At the outset of our project we assumed that generic casework and group work were, by and large, ineffective counselling techniques when working with West Indian clients. Hence it would have been necessary to develop new methods of intervention. We soon discovered, however, that these techniques (traditional to the practice of helping professionals) are effective with this client group, and that it is the engagement of the client which is crucial to effective service delivery. Extensive case studies (comparative analysis of West Indians vis-a-vis West Indians as well as non-West Indian clients) soon clarified that effective intervention is that approach that gives credence to those cultural values, attitudes and behaviours that the client brings to the counselling situation. A process of honest self-examination, in relation to the principles governing the counselling relationship, facilitates cultural sensitivity that builds rapport between client and therapist. This formulates the basis of an approach into which a variety of treatment methods can be successfully and effectively incorporated. For this reason this section will focus on the principles governing the counselling relationship, with added emphasis and reinterpretations of those that we recognize as having special significance in engaging the West Indian client in the counselling process. It will also discuss significant issues that were consistently evident in the cases we worked with throughout the project. As such, we will make use of some well-established concepts that are basic to the training of the helping professional, highlighting cultural factors and their significance in working with these generic concepts. This discussion is therefore an addendum to the body of knowledge that formulates the training of the helping professional.

Principles of the Counselling Relationship

The literature on counselling clearly identifies certain principles underlying the relationship between therapists (counsellor, social worker, psychologist, psychiatrist) and their clients. Although terminologies vary according to school of thought, these principles are consistent and they are listed below.

1. Individualization — the client is recognized and respected as a unique individual with his or her own needs, strengths, weaknesses and aspirations, and methods are adapted accordingly.
2. Acceptance — the client is perceived and accepted as he or she really is, while being helped to maintain his or her sense of innate dignity and personal worth. This frees the client to reveal himself or herself and thus engage in realistic problem resolution.
3. Maintenance of a non-judgmental attitude — the client is helped to look at aspects of his or her attitudes and behaviours that are dysfunctional, without being assigned guilt, innocence or responsibility for the dysfunction. The counsellor, however, makes functional judgments about these attitudes and behaviours, and transmits them to the client sensitively.
4. Client self-determination — the client's right and need to make his or her own choices and decisions is respected; the counsellor's responsibility is to help the client to develop his or her potential for self-direction within the parameters of the existing social norms. The client's recognition of the counsellor's respect for these rights and needs also helps to reinforce the principles of individualization and acceptance.

5. Controlled emotional involvement — the client's feelings and understanding of their meaning are responded to with appropriate, purposeful sensitivity by the counsellor.
6. Purposeful expression of feelings — the client is encouraged to express his or her positive and negative feelings freely, and the counsellor listens purposefully, neither discouraging nor condemning.
7. Confidentiality — the counsellor, other professionals and staff, or volunteers involved, have the ethical obligation to preserve confidentiality with respect to information revealed by the client.[3]

The realization of these principles rests on the willingness of the professional to engage in a process of honest self-examination. The importance of developing a keen sensitivity to self by the professional cannot be overemphasized, particularly when working with a multicultural clientele. This undertaking holds true for all helping professionals and is at the core of therapeutic effectiveness, creativity and professional growth. Furthermore, self-examination is of particular import in black-white inter-relationships, since Blacks have been negatively stereotyped for centuries, producing assumptions and perceptions about Blacks as well as non-Blacks.[4] These assumptions and perceptions are not necessarily at a conscious level; therefore it is crucial that this self-examination be complete. An honest examination of the professional's values, attitudes and beliefs brings to the fore areas of personal bias and conflict that could be significant to the transaction between the client and therapist.

Principles Deserving Added Emphasis

Individualization It is unfortunate that many non-Blacks assume that "all Black people are alike".[5] This assumption is essentially a proclamation that skin colour overrides all other factors that encompass the human *individual* and that yield individuality. Such a stance of course denies Black people their individuality. Black West Indians do share a common heritage and, depending on their geographic origins, will have certain cultural patterns in common, but there are many other life experiences that give rise to the same individual differences such as exist within other ethnic groups. It is even more unfortunate that Blackness is too often associated with lower class status, ignorance, laziness, poverty, deprivation, lack of intelligence and immorality. The maintenance of these destructive stereotypes has widespread implications for helping professionals working with Black West Indians.[6]

Historically, references to Blacks via the media have been negative in the overwhelming majority of instances. Even institutions of "higher learning", where the helping professional is trained, also intentionally or inadvertently contribute to this stereotyping. Adherence to such stereotypical thinking results in the professional's inability to accept the client as an individual, perceiving skin colour as the client's only problem. This is clearly a negation of the principle of individualization. The platform of the liberal "colour-blind" professional proclaiming that "*all* people are alike, and Black people are no different from White people" also needs careful examination. This statement is essentially accurate, but we would caution professionals who subscribe to this platform that there are some clients for whom skin colour is a problem. Furthermore, it could be a subtle withholding of acknowledgment of one aspect of the client's identity, nullifying his or her right to be seen as an individual.

A constructive approach for the helping professional is to recognize the characteristics, including skin colour and culture, that make each client a *unique* individual. Recognition of these characteristics, without stereotypical thinking or colour-blindness, "frees" the professional to engage in purposeful factfinding and in planning effective strategies of intervention according to individual need.[7]

Illustration: There are those black parents, who, having themselves accepted negative stereotypes of Blacks, explain their children's inappropriate behaviour in terms of their children's blackness. The professional who accepts negative stereotypes would experience difficulty in exploring the dynamics behind this problem. On the other hand, the colour-blind professional would also have difficulty in engaging such clients meaningfully, and could easily be trapped in a useless debate on skin colour.[8]

Acceptance This principle has features in common with individualization, in that if a professional cannot see past the "colour of skin" and the associated negative stereotypes, then neither is *acceptance* of the individual possible. The genuine demonstration of this principle also demands self-examination on the part of the helping professional. We have led professional workshops in Toronto on "Understanding West Indian Culture" and have observed that values and attitudes that are markedly "*different*" from those of the host culture (particularly as they relate to the alternative patterns of family organization) have been sometimes negatively labelled. Some helping professionals have difficulty accepting these differences. As Strean (1978) pointed out, most professionals would agree with the notion that all clients should be genuinely accepted and unconditionally helped. Resolving one's negative feelings towards individuals who have different values takes time, however. He further states that it is easier to respect those clients whose beliefs are similar to those of the professional. Acceptance of, and identification with, clients whose attitudes have customarily elicited discomfort and hostility within the professional, demands extensive self-examination and hard work.[9]

Honest self-examination enables counsellors to be genuinely accepting of individuals who are from different cultures. This process also helps counsellors to become aware of, and where necessary to change, their negative attitudes and stereotypes. Implicit in these stereotypes are certain immoral and antisocial behaviours usually attributed to black people by the prejudiced individual.[10] Thus, failure to indulge in the self-examination process results in confusing personal biases and prejudices with the realities of the client's culture, and with the presenting problem. Approval of antisocial attitudes or behaviour is not the goal of acceptance. Neither is it what is "good" but what is "real". The client's reality that is relevant to his or her problem is the object of acceptance.[11] Furthermore, the counsellor's inability to accept the client as he or she really is, is a formidable block to the therapeutic process. It takes a very clever actor to conceal negative feelings in the counselling situation, since these feelings can be transmitted verbally or non-verbally and most clients will see beyond the facade.

Illustration: If a counsellor adheres to the stereotype that black people are unintelligent and lazy and is working with a client whose limited education is problematic, the most likely assumption would be that this is intrinsically racial and therefore the situation is not amenable to change. Hence an incorrect diagnosis would be formed and consequently inappropriate intervention would be followed.

Maintenance cf a Non-Judgmental Attitude An ongoing dilemna for people is that of cultural differences. People often perceive their culture as "superior" to others. Implicit in this perception are value judgments as to "right and wrong", "good and bad". The "wrong" and the "bad" are judgments usually attributed to *individuals* with a different culture.

> No culture is absolutely good; none absolutely bad either. All cultures are valid each being endowed with both positive and negative elements. It is a grave error for anyone, or any society, to exhibit a superiority complex vis-a-vis another man's culture. At best, such a complex is paternalism; at worst, it begets utter racism.[12]

Counsellors working with West Indians need a high degree of sensitivity and self-awareness if they hope to avoid sitting in judgment on clients who manifest attitudes and behaviours that were valid and acceptable in the Caribbean, but are not in keeping with Canadian cultural norms. Hence the effective implementation of the non-judgmental attitude, like individualization and genuine acceptance, also demands self-examination. The non-judgmental attitude, however, does not mean approval of culture-specific attitudes and behaviours that are dysfunctional or that violate the laws in the Canadian community. It is the responsibility of the counsellor to make evaluative judgments of such *attitudes* and *behaviours* and communicate them to the client without assigning blame or guilt.[13]

Illustration: In Chapter II we discussed parent-child relationships and child management techniques traditional to the West Indian family. In the Caribbean, where children are not generally perceived as having individual rights, child management techniques by and large function to ensure obedience by the child and to maintain parental authority and control. Living in the new society, many such parents who continue to use these traditional practices, find themselves in conflict with sections of the Child Welfare Act, which labels these management practices as "abuse". This is a very sensitive issue for many West Indian parents who perceive their management practices as "superior" to those espoused by "human development" experts. The obvious difficulties in this situation can be handled through a sensitive and non-judgmental interpretation of the Child Welfare Act to clients, as well as a sharing of knowledge about, and an encouragement to adopt, new parenting techniques.

This issue arose in the case of Mrs. M.*

Mrs. M, a 29-year-old woman, had been separated from her husband for over one year. She lived with six-year-old Paul and was experiencing difficulty in coping with Paul's defiant behaviour. Mrs. M was depressed, lonely, and missing the emotional support of friends and family. She worked fairly long hours at her bookkeeping job and coped well financially. Mr. M had very little contact with his wife and child and did not provide any emotional or financial support. With the strain of her job and being a single parent, Mrs. M found Paul's need for attention very taxing. When there was a culmination of pressures, together with a serious act of defiance or disobedience by Paul, Mrs M found it difficult to cope, and on some occasions she spanked him. Welts from spankings were noticed by Paul's teacher who brought this to the attention of the Children's Aid Society. Mrs. M became involved with the CAS and was also referred to the Family Service Association for counselling. The following are excerpts from the first interviews:

Mrs. M: Mrs. P from the CAS sent me to you . . . she told me that I needed counselling.

(Mrs. M seemed to be resigned and controlled and appeared to be waiting on the counsellor to initiate the process.)

Counsellor: Could you tell me how you came to be involved with the CAS?

(Mrs. M proceeds to describe the incident at home that led her to spanking Paul. As the dialogue continued, it was evident that Mrs M. was experiencing a great deal of frustration in her efforts to cope as a single parent. The counsellor was empathetic and supported Mrs M in continuing to describe her situation and express her feelings, demonstrating individualization and acceptance. Having established some meaningful rapport, the counsellor proceeds to explain to Mrs M that her method of punishment was deemed to be abusive under the Child Welfare Act; the responsibility that professionals have when they become aware of such situations; the role of the Children's Aid Society and the reason for referral.)

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*Names here and later are fictitious.

The interview continues . . .

Counsellor: Mrs. M, Paul disobeyed your instruction that he not wear his good pants out to play and you reacted by spanking him.

Mrs. M: Yes . . . all the time he won't listen to me and I don't know what to do to make him listen! . . . I don't want to have to hit him . . .

Counsellor: I understand . . . when you come home from a day at work, you are tired and Paul's disobedience is very frustrating; therefore, you react with the technique you hope will make him listen. (Non-judgmental and accepting of the client)

Mrs. M: But he still doesn't listen . . . and I really don't know what else to do.

(Mrs. M recognizes that her method of disciplining is ineffective; she is uncomfortable with using corporal punishment but, unaware of other methods, uses it as a last resort. The counsellor recognizes that listening is an ongoing issue between mother and child and that Mrs M is unaware of its relevance to Paul's attention-getting behaviour. The counsellor uses the issue of listening to engage Mrs. M in a process of developing new ways of relating to Paul, which in turn will enhance her effectiveness as a parent.)

Counsellor: Certainly Paul should respect that you are his mummy and should listen to you. But do you think that maybe Paul is trying to tell you something and have you listened to him?

Mrs. M: Well . . . I don't know . . . what do you mean?

Counsellor: Well . . . since Paul is only six years old, he would not have the ability, as an older child might, to tell you clearly about the feelings that he has inside and what he is thinking . . . and in his own way, he is trying to get you to listen to him.

Mrs. M: Well . . . I never thought of that . . . But why doesn't he just tell me . . . I always ask him "how was school today" and "what he did" and he always says . . . "fine" . . . "OK".

Counsellor: Yes . . . partly because he wants things to be fine and OK and also because he very likely does not know how to put into words many of his feelings and thoughts. And, as children often do, maybe he assumes that you know what he is feeling inside.

Mrs. M: But . . . I can't know if he doesn't tell me . . . I tell him how I feel.

Counsellor: How do you tell Paul about your feelings?

Mrs. M: Well, I tell him that I am the only provider . . . that I must work long hours in order to keep us and that this is the reason why he should listen to me and not destroy his good clothes.

Counsellor: You mean you have given Paul some statements about your situation and some reasons why you need him to co-operate with the rules. But does he know that you are really worried, lonely and very often tired?

Mrs. M: Yes . . . he should know. I work a lot of extra time, even some Saturdays, to keep us . . . because his father doesn't give me anything . . . he doesn't care . . . he wouldn't even give Paul a pair of shoes . . . (a mixture of anger and hurt in her voice).

Counsellor: Sounds as if you work hard in order to provide well for Paul and that you feel quite angry and hurt inside about a lot of things.

Mrs. M: Yes (drops her eyes . . . long pause) but I try not to let that bother me anymore.

Counsellor: Now you concentrate on providing . . .

Mrs. M: Yes . . .

Counsellor: Do you think Paul maybe is trying to tell you how he feels about you spending so much time away from home?

Mrs. M: (defensively) . . . But I can't help it.

Counsellor: I understand . . . Lack of time seems to be a problem in the relationship between you and Paul. Have you ever talked about that with him?

The session continues and the counsellor helps Mrs M to talk about the amount of time available for her to spend with Paul; the activities in and outside the home that they may be involved in together; how she could initiate conversations with Paul, at his level, so as to elicit his verbal input. As sessions continued over the next two months, Mrs M came to recognize that she expected more mature behaviour from Paul than was reasonable. She also recognized that this was partly due to his physical appearance (he was quite tall for his age) as well as her own need to have a child who was less dependent on her. Mrs. M further realized that she was indeed feeling hurt and angry about the marriage breakdown and that sometimes when Paul was particularly unco-operative she reacted more angrily than was appropriate.

Client Self-Determination This principle demands the greatest degree of awareness and understanding of West Indian cultural variables for its effective implementation. Since self-determination is dependent on the individual's decision-making ability, it is crucial that the counsellor be aware of the inter-relation between such variables as the client's level of education and ability to communicate effectively with non-West Indians. In addition, the West Indian immigrant, depending on length of time in Canada, may not be at the level of adjustment in which he or she feels a sense of belonging to the new society. Such an individual may assume that the consequence of using a social service is to surrender his or her right to self-determination.

Many West Indians, particularly those with limited formal education, find it difficult to use community resources effectively, due to their unfamiliarity with such resources. There is, however, another factor, reported in Ford's 1976 study on Black West Indian Students in Canadian Community Colleges.

> "There are certain features which the students share. One was the greater dependency of Black students, especially women students, on the older adults in the environment. This is not to say that the girls show no independence of initiative. However, there is less of the spirit of "I'll go my own way" seen in them than in Canadian women of the same age. In few of their home cultures is moving away from home taken by a young woman. They were described, too, as more amenable to direction from their instructors — most were obviously brought up with the habit of obeying the authority figures — but many appeared to *EXPECT* direction, and to be at a loss when it was not forthcoming."[14]

Although the sample in this study was composed of community college students, this statement probably can be generalized to many West Indians. This is due to the fact that Caribbean socializing institutions have authoritarian structures and processes. The counsellor's awareness of these influences facilitates the ability to make a sensitive assessment on the degree of need for direction, and the adaptation of the self-determination principle to each individual client. This sensitivity also helps the counsellor to avoid confusing the client's need for direction with lack of motivation and unhealthy dependency.[15]

While the counsellor must respect the client's right and need to make his or her own choices and decisions, the client may also need to be helped to decide how to implement these choices and decisions. Such a situation may arise where the client, with the counsellor's support, has decided to apply for subsidized housing. Further helping of the client may be needed: in contacting the housing authorities, filling out an application and taking steps to document eligibility.[16]

Confidentiality Since privacy is a particularly important issue for most West Indians, the implementation of this principle is also worthy of special attention. In previous sections, we described how West Indians, in their native lands, relied on informal familial and community support networks for the resolution of personal and social problems. Approaching an agency in Canada to discuss personal problems with a stranger is a totally new and anxiety-provoking notion, so it is crucial that the helping professional clearly explain the principle of confidentiality, as well as reasons for needing certain information, which the client might consider private. The keen desire of clients to maintain privacy is in keeping with the long-established pattern of mistrust evolving out of the historical experience of Blacks. Keeping extensive secrets is an extension of the issue of maintaining privacy, and can be observed even between marital partners. This attitude, coupled with a lack of understanding about the nature of professionalized counselling in Canada, inhibits many clients from seeking help, even when indications are clear to them that help is needed. As a result, most West Indians seeking help from the Family Service Association were referred by some other agency with which they were involved earlier due to an intractable crisis.[17] Very few of the clients seen at the Family Service Association made contact through their own initiative. It must also be stressed that asking for help is not easy for most individuals, regardless of culture. How much more difficult must such requests be for West Indian immigrants whose motivation for migration was that of finding a "better life"? When problems arise and make this goal seem distant or impossible, one's internal conflicts are great. Having to ask for help may, in fact, exacerbate these conflicts. Self-perceptions of being unsuccessful, due to the existence of problems in their new home, often give rise to the fear that this situation could be reported to friends and relatives still in the Caribbean, causing loss of reputation. Hence, some West Indian clients are especially reluctant to be served by a West Indian professional.

Clients who lack an understanding of counselling structures, process and content, and to whom the principle of confidentiality is unclear, can frustrate counsellors' efforts to help. When facts about personal issues are sought, the relevance of which has not been made clear to clients, they are likely to assume that counsellors "Jus' wan' fas' in a mi business" (is just plain nosey). Some West Indian clients will therefore be reluctant to divulge such information. It is also imperative that counsellors explain, where the team approach to helping is necessary, to whom and under what conditions, information about the client would be made available, since clients might not understand and may perceive the involvement of others as a betrayal of trust.

Establishing Contact The unfamiliarity of West Indians with Canadian social agencies and services, and the importance placed on one's privacy, suggest that special consideration must be given to the process of outreach and its usefulness in establishing contact with West Indians prior to their becoming clients. This applies specifically to agencies within the voluntary sector where it is the client who initiates the request for service. There are understandably significant differences in establishing contact for professionals in voluntary agencies, compared to those in agencies in which service is required by some external authority, or where seeking aid is not entirely voluntary.

Throughout this West Indian project, many families and individuals were directed to the agency by professionals in other agencies. In spite of numerous telephone contacts by the counsellors, many failed to keep appointments. Of those who came to the initial interview, it was apparent that many had major misconceptions about the function of the agency and the role of the professional. For example, when a mother and her child were referred due to her child's acting-out behaviour, the mother's attitude revealed her expectation that the professional would "fix up" the child without her involvement in the treatment. The mother was disappointed that her involvement was necessary. (See example under Roles and Expectations.) The implication emerges, therefore, that an important aspect of establishing initial contact with West Indians may depend on the client's understanding of the need for referral and the methods of service.

Establishing contact oftentimes necessitates outreach on the part of both the referral source and the counsellor. However, although the counsellor and the referral source may both be committed to outreach, it is their responsibility to also assess client readiness, bearing in mind that some West Indians readily submit to authority figures because of their reluctance to appear unco-operative, i.e. the individual may agree to accept counselling, so as to appear polite, but is not really committed to this agreement.[18]

Factors in Engaging the Client

Tuning In Most West Indian clients entering the counselling situation, we found, were usually referred by an "authority" figure or agency due to a crisis. Therefore, the client's emotional stance at intake is likely to be one of very mixed feelings — ambivalence, despair, helplessness, fear, embarrassment and, predominantly, anger, all of which can be detected readily in verbal and non-verbal cues. A particularly important note is sensitivity to and understanding of non-verbal cues in the joint "tuning-in" phase in order to enhance the process of engagement when working with this client group.[19] As the counsellor engages the client in expressing his or her purpose and expectation in seeking service, these cues (as well as the feelings involved in the presenting problem) become more explicit.

Roles and Expectations Couched in the client's statement of purpose in seeking service are his or her expectations of the service and of the counsellor. These expectations are generally reflective of the client's cultural biases. For many West Indians, "to counsel" means to berate (scold), to instruct, or to preach at. Consequently "to be counselled" may imply to them being scolded (told off), instructed, or to be preached at by the counsellor. These preconceptions are partly responsible for the kind of feelings and expectations that clients bring into the counselling situation.[20] Hence the need to carefully clarify roles and expectations, of both client and counsellor, cannot be overstressed. An important aspect in the process of clarification is an awareness by the professional of the attitudes some West Indians have toward the counsellor: an authority figure who is seen as "having all the answers" and who is expected to give direction.

The following excerpts from the first interview with a mother demonstrates this attitude well.

Counsellor: What seems to be the problem?

Miss W: (angrily) Well, I have three children, but it is my girl Anne that won't behave. She is a lot of trouble at school and the teacher told me to come here.

Counsellor: Yes . . .

Miss W: (tension and anxiety in her voice) I wonder if you could talk to her and make her behave, because I don't have the time for all this running up and down . . .

The client is angry about the need to seek help and is anxious about taking time off work to keep the appointment, which adds to her displeasure with her child. Her culturally-biased perception of counselling led her to expect the counsellor to "take action" (scold, instruct and preach at) which the client assumed would ensure instant improvement in her child's behaviour. Further statements in this interview confirmed that the mother did not see any necessity for her own involvement in the helping process. It was also clear that the mother was feeling considerable pressures from many sources — school authorities frequently calling her on the job with attendant absenteeism from work by the mother in order to meet with the teacher; frustration at being unable to understand or cope with her child's behaviour; anxiety about her parental capabilities; anger at her child for making it necessary to seek help; all over and above the everyday demands of coping in a new society.

The interview continues after the counsellor supports the mother in expressing her feelings of anger, frustration and anxiety. Having established empathy she is also encouraged to relate the circumstances that led up to the referral.

Counsellor: Miss W . . . the school counsellor is concerned that Anne is not learning as she should because of her misbehaviour . . .

The counsellor has recognized that Miss W has limited formal education and therefore uses terminology that Miss W is able to understand. She had quoted the school counsellor's statement . . . "Anne is not benefiting by her school experience because of her disruptive acting-out behaviour, and is functioning at the level of a six or seven-year-old child" . . . and it was clear that Miss W's interpretation was that Anne was consciously refusing to learn and there were also subtle hints in her statements indicating that she had given sexual conotations to the word "functioning". The counsellor clarified these misinterpretations for Miss W. The interview is continuing . . .

Miss W: (hesitantly) But why won't she behave and just learn? If she continues this way it will be bad . . . she will end up just like me . . .

(Miss W is embarrassed about her limited formal education which has resulted in her inability to escape exhausting menial work).

Counsellor: You seem to be very concerned that Anne do well at school and you are hoping that she will have a life easier than you are having.

Miss W: Yes (sighing). I talk to her all the time; I even punish her and she still won't behave. I don't know what more to do, so you talk to her.

The counsellor uses analogies to help Miss W to begin to recognize that:

- sometimes children have feelings and thoughts that they are unable to express and this makes them feel unhappy; therefore they behave in ways that draw attention to themselves; the state of unhappiness impedes learning;
- adults need to be sensitive to this fact and help children to express their thoughts and feelings;
- this process has the potential to enhance the relationship between parents and children which in turn results in more co-operative behaviour;
- the child's improved emotional state and ability to co-operate with adults, facilitates learning in school. The interview continues . . .

Miss W: So things have to be good between Anne and I?
Counsellor: Yes . . . that would be helpful and you and I can work together towards that.
Miss W: (questioningly) Work together . . . how?
Counsellor: We will continue to meet at your convenience, and talk about some of the things that might be upsetting Anne and some ways in which you can help her to tell you.
Miss W: So I have to come back here and talk . . . for how long?
Counsellor: Yes . . . until you and Anne's teacher feel that Anne's behaviour has improved sufficiently.
Miss W: Oh . . . I see.

Miss W is beginning to understand the issues involved in the presenting problem and the importance of her contribution to the resolution of this problem. She also understands that it will take more than one interview to bring about change and she is helped to express her feelings about this new experience of counselling. She feels somewhat more comfortable and agrees to further interviews.

Therefore, in addition to implementing the generic principles of counselling, the establishment of an effective counselling relationship with West Indian clients likely will also demand clarification of roles and expectations, as well as an interpretation of the counselling process. A crucial aspect of this interpretation is to help the client who perceives counselling as "instruction", to understand the importance of his or her willing participation.

Establishing Trust Having established the expectation of verbal input, many clients remain hesitant to talk. This is not necessarily indicative of resistance but may be due to a combination, or all of, the following:

- **Limited formal education** — Clients with limited schooling and who are not fluent or do not feel comfortable, in using standard English (and are unable to use the more familiar dialect when served by non-West Indian professionals) are likely to remain silent. Silence may be his or her conscious behaviour in protecting self against exposure of this limitation and should not be confused with unconscious defence mechanisms. Often, though, silence will be a reaction to situations in which clients truly fail to understand what has been said. The following excerpt from an interview will demonstrate:

  (The counsellor recognizes that the client is silent after explanation of wardship procedures)

  Counsellor: Did you understand my explanations?
  Client. Yes . . . (hesitantly)
  Counsellor: Tell me in your own words what you understood.
  Client: (smiling) I don't really know.

  It is clear from the client's reaction that the counsellor not only has the responsibility to use language that will be understood by such clients but also to carefully determine clients' understanding of the communication. This process helps both counsellors and clients to be comfortable with each other's capacity for communication, and reinforces clients' feelings of being accepted as they really are, further facilitating the establishment of trust.

- **Privacy** — Clients' silence in many instances is a conscious protection against feelings of embarrassment. Counsellors, while respecting clients' need for privacy, must explain the need for a counsellor to gain a clear understanding of the client as an individual. The essential message to be communicated to the client, in these situations, is one of caring and commitment to helping. In addition, there also must be a clear message to clients that the counsellor's purpose is not just that of digging for secrets. An assurance of confidentiality reinforces clients' feelings of being treated as worthwhile individuals and further aids in building trust.
- **Racial factors** — R[illegible] similarities and differences are important variables in establishing trust. Many blacks perceive the "system" (meaning white pe[illegible] oppressive. Hence the white helping professional may be perceived by the black client as an agent of the "system" and therefore resist the professional's efforts to help him or her.[21] The client who holds such perceptions, and who still must seek help from a white professional, is likely to be at least ambivalent, and probably resistant, to any trust in the counsellor. Professionals who have neglected to analyze their own feelings about racial factors, who deny the existence of racism, and behave as though they are colour-blind, will be unable to talk openly with clients about racial issues and cannot genuinely implement the principles of a counselling relationship or the building of trust.[22] Sensitivity in dealing with racial factors, therefore, is crucial to providing meaningful help for the client. This, (1) enables professionals to avoid the pitfall of making racial differences the core issue of work, as some clients may resort to this form of projection instead of dealing with their real problem; (2) frees professionals to recognize problems that are, in fact, due to racism.

While it is obvious to most helping professionals that racial difference can create obstacles in establishing a trusting relationship, it is often assumed that racial similarity poses no difficulty. On closer examination, however, this syllogism sometimes proves inaccurate.[23] First, there is the West Indian clients' concern about privacy and confidentiality when a West Indian professional is the counsellor, for some clients. Also, there is the problem of shade consciousness and what might be termed "Uncle Tom thinking", i.e. the white or light-complexioned black professional may be considered of a higher status (by virtue of his or her whiteness or degree thereof) and therefore "better" (more skilled). These attitudes, however, are not exclusive to the black client in this situation; indeed, the black professional who has not benefited from honest self-analysis may also hold similar attitudes. Calneck, (1970), discusses the great responsibility of the black therapist and the issue of counter transference in the relationship between black therapist and black client. Black therapists may not only project their own self-image onto black clients, but may also adopt common stereotypical attitudes of how blacks may (or should) think, feel and behave.[24] Black professionals, therefore, have a responsibility similar to that of their white counterparts. They also need to be aware of their true perceptions about blackness and racial issues in general, since such consciousness more readily enables the establishment of an effective, trusting relationship.

- **The issue of authority** — The professionals' use of authority is not generally given consideration in discussions on the relationship between client and counsellor. However, from our previous consideration here on authority and West Indians' perception of being "helped" as being directed, it should be clear that in working with this client group (particularly those with limited formal education and undeveloped personal resources) this issue requires specific consideration by helping professionals.

Most counselling theories adhere to the non-directive approach in which clients are brought to the point where they make their own analytical conclusions. This is in keeping with the principle of client self-determination. Our discussion on the use of authority is by no means intended to negate this principle, but is intended to give readers an understanding of its relevance in developing trust in the counselling process. Basic to the concept of counselling is "beginning where the client is" and for many West Indians who have been socialized to authoritarian structures, the client's expectation is that the professional act as authority figures did in their native lands.[25]

The use of authority in the counselling relationship does not imply a paternalistic or an authoritarian approach, but instead relates to the professional's presentation of self as knowledgeable, skilled, and committed to clients' benefit. Such professionals would, for instance (depending on appropriateness) help their clients make connections between "isolated" facts in meaningful psycho-dynamic terms. They may also find it necessary at times to give clear advice and direction. Readers may find this approach contrary to most theoretical principles, or even unethical, but many West Indians (and other) clients who remain "stuck" are actually in the dilemma of not knowing how or what steps to take in order to effect changes indicated by the conclusions they reached through the help of their counsellors. The following case will demonstrate a client in such a dilemma:

> Miss B is the mother of a seven-year-old who was severely withdrawn and anorexic — the result of separation and emotional deprivation. With the help of the counsellor she gained intellectual understanding of her child's condition; however, she was unable to select what steps to take to effect change. In fact, her question was, would her child "grow out of it?" meaning "would this condition change as the child matured?" implying that physical development alone could bring about change. The counsellor recognized that Miss B was unaware of how important the emotional sphere was in helping her child overcome these difficulties. She deemed it necessary to give Miss B specific suggestions on how to demonstrate love and affection to her daughter, e.g. hugging and kissing her. The counsellor followed this advice with a clear explanation of the value such physical contact and expression of affection have.

Another cultural factor that relates to the use of authority is the West Indian's regard for titles, e.g. Mr., Mrs., Miss. The Canadian custom of using first names in almost all situations and with all ages is uncommon in the Caribbean, and is generally perceived as disrespectful. First name use will appear to be a reduction in status and therefore insulting to adult West Indians, particularly in formal situations. Professionals who introduce themselves by their first names, or who address their clients in like manner, could unnecessarily arouse negative feelings within the client, a formidable constraint to the counselling process. Clients' perception of status reduction through the use of first names may also be transferred to the professional, thereby reducing the effectiveness of the professional and the worth of his or her services. Therefore it is recommended that titles and surnames be retained in such situations as setting appointments, telephone contacts and making referrals to other professionals.

Contracting

West Indian clients who enter counselling for the first time often express doubt and hesitancy at the end of the first session. The expectation of tangible help or instant solutions is in contrast to the professional's offer of "talking or listening" as the means to understand and help clients to resolve problematic psycho-social conditions. Clients' hesitance and feelings of doubt have implications for contracting. A clear sensitive explanation of the counselling process, as well as the rationale for this approach to helping, will further clarify roles and expectations and facilitate contracting:[26]

> Mrs. M was severely depressed as a result of separation from her husband and was trying to cope with her single-parent situation. She came to the Family Service Association requesting that the counsellor make the decision whether she should return to work or go to school. As she talked, it was clear that she was experiencing desperate feelings of loneliness and a believed loss of integrity resulting from a long series of disappointments. She had developed a pattern of romanticizing, which blocked her ability to set realistic expectations of herself and of her inter-personal relationships. This all set the stage for further disappointments, thus compounding her depression and depleting her coping abilities.
>
> The counsellor, while empathizing with Mrs. M's request and the need for a redirection of her life, refrained from making a choice. Instead, the counsellor recognized that Mrs. M did not have the ability to cope with the consequences of either work or school at that time, and helped her to understand that her present emotional state was not conducive to making an appropriate decision and also cope with the possible consequences of further disappointments. An explanation of her *real* difficulties, and how the counselling process could help her to come to terms with these, thereby increasing her decision-making skills and coping abilities, helped Mrs. M to make the decision to agree to a contract of five further sessions and to set the goals for work in counselling.

Significant Issues

Counselling is a method of intervention designed to effect change in problematic behaviours and situations with individuals or families. In order to understand the behaviours presented, it is essential to be keenly sensitive to the individual's frame of reference. This frame of reference is essentially composed of beliefs, attitudes and values, the interdependent aspects of individual psychological makeup which evolve out of socio-historical experiences — the individual's, his or her family, his or her culture.

Chapter I presented a brief outline of West Indian history and the values and attitudes which developed out of those historical experiences. Any particular client may or may not possess a composite of these beliefs, attitudes and values; he or she is a *unique individual* with his or her unique frame of reference. What is of significance here is that some of the behaviours and attitudes developed as a means of coping with oppression now serve to perpetuate the victimization of Black people at an individual and societal level.[27] It is therefore crucial that helping professionals, (of whatever race, ethnicity or religion) in commitment to their professional ethics, become aware of their perceptions of Black people. Accepting negative stereotypes and destructive behaviours as "the way black people are", serves to lock clients into problematic situations. Furthermore, such acceptance is an obstacle to accurate diagnosis and appropriate intervention. It is the responsibility of all professionals to challenge dysfunctional or negative attitudes and behaviours, which some black people have come to accept as part of "black culture".

Negative Self-Concept

The process by which an individual comes to develop a "picture of herself" or "a picture of himself" is extremely complex. It involves the interaction of many variables within the individual's milieu (family, society, culture) which allows the individual the right to ultimately define himself or herself. Within the authoritarian structures of the Caribbean, children accept messages about themselves, usually without question. Even into adolescence, which is the crucial stage for development of personal identity, these messages generally continue to be passively accepted. Individuals in this kind of situation do not develop a strong ego and usually develop a self-concept and ego heavily weighted in favour of the judgments of others rather than in "self-knowledge". When these messages come from "really significant others" they carry great import in the development of the individual's self-concept. When people are recipients of constant negative messages from such "others", their picture of self will be negative.[28]

West Indians who have negative feelings about themselves arrive at this point as a result of a history of rejection, blatant or subtle derogations from those who comprise their "significant others". Also, because of the learned negative stereotype that "nothing black is any good", he or she has often been the target of painful ridicule and derision because of his or her blackness and ethnic identity. These negative experiences ultimately can result in the individual's feelings of worthlessness.[29]

Clients who have negative feelings about themselves, as they talk, communicate messages which essentially say: "I do not deserve good treatment"; "it's okay for me to receive unfair treatment"; "I am no good". In-depth examination of these messages will not reveal any sound justification for this, or any suggestion of deep-rooted feelings of guilt. This absence of guilt feelings is unlike clients who have negative feelings about themselves rooted in some unacceptable behaviour or thought that leaves them feeling guilty. The absence of guilt is not indicative of psychopathology but is the result of unquestioned acceptance of "laid on" messages. The client's posture indicates feelings of dejection and the dress often gives the message of "covering up" rather than enhancement.

An example of such a client was Miss K, a 32-year-old unmarried mother of five children who were fathered by four different men. Miss K had a history of excessive brutality and verbal abuse suffered at the hands of a mother who was cold, angry and oppressive, having been severely hurt herself. Miss K, as a child, was extremely docile (fearful) in her mother's presence, but at school she would fight viciously with other students without the slightest provocation. She was severely punished with whippings, ridicule and scorn for these outbursts both by the teacher and her mother, and these scourgings were accompanied by derogatory remarks about the blackness of her skin. She had no judgments about her mother's treatment of her nor any comments or opinions about her mother's general behaviour and personality. At 17 years of age Miss K had her first sexual involvement with a man of whom her mother disapproved. She bore a child and remained in her mother's home. For a number of reasons the relationship with the father of her child broke down. This kind of disappointment and hurt (rejection) continued throughout the history of her involvement with men.

Miss K, at the time of counselling, was feeling totally defeated, listless and worthless. In spite of the fact that she had always been self-sufficient and had managed her domestic and working life with a reasonable degree of maturity, Miss K could not identify any strengths in herself. In addition, during the extensive period of counselling, she never once expressed any angry feelings towards her mother, her teachers or any of the fathers of her children. Her theme was that she "deserved" bad treatment and her rationale was that "perhaps God had destined that she should suffer". After four months of fortnightly sessions and continued depression, the counsellor pursued the issue of her self-concept. The conversation was as follows:

Counsellor: Miss K, if you had to write down a description of yourself; you, Margaret, what would you write?

Miss K: (looking puzzled, as if such a thought or idea were unthinkable) . . . Who me?

Counsellor: Yes, you, Margaret.

Miss K: I couldn't . . . (pause) . . . nothing!

Counsellor: (sensing that the question may be unclear, attempts to clarify and be more specific) When a person writes or talks about herself and who she is, she may include such things as how she sees herself physically and also the qualities in her personality and her talents.

Miss K: (holding her head down) I don't know.

Counsellor: You have always been a hard worker, self-sufficient, have taken care of yourself, your needs and your children's needs.

Miss K: Yes, I don't expect anything from anybody. If I want something I save until I can go and buy it. I hang my hat where I can reach it. (I live within my means.) I don't want to have no trouble. (The client does not recognize these qualities as positive attributes. The counsellor points this out to her.)

Counsellor: So that you are a responsible person in terms of handling money. You plan your finances quite carefully and you are an independent adult.

Miss K: Hmmm . . . I try.

Counsellor: Anything else?

Miss K: I don't know. (looking up, still bewildered)

Counsellor: (encouragingly) Come on Margaret, think. How would you describe how you look?

Miss K: (hanging her head, looking embarrassed and expressing a feeling of shame and sadness) . . . silence.

Counsellor: Margaret, if I had a mirror held in my hand, what would you see?

Miss K: (sharply, with scorn in her voice and curled lips) I am the blackest *thing* and ugly.

Counsellor: Yes, you are black. But how come a "thing and ugly"?

Miss K: Well . . . nobody would want me. I always feel shame. I don't even look into mirror . . . even Jane (daughter) tells me that I don't fix up myself to look good. She gets mad at me sometimes.

Counsellor: The men you have been involved with found you attractive, at the beginning.

Miss K: Hmmm . . . them. (with derision in her voice)

Counsellor: They don't count?

Miss K: Well you know in the West Indies people always say that *black is bad*. Well, it must be true.

Counsellor: You believe that?

Miss K: I don't know.

Counsellor: When you were fighting at school you were labelled "bad" and "black" . . . right?

Miss K: Yes.

Counsellor: And you came to believe that the two were connected?

Miss K: Well, (hesitantly) . . . but I don't know why they used to do me so much terrible things . . . like my mother. Once, when I was little, about eight or nine . . . (Miss K. proceeds to describe an incident in which she suffered great physical pain, unfair treatment, humiliation and rejection. There were subsequent incidents of her attacking school mates with vicious vindictiveness which were illustrative of the extent of her deep-seated feeling of rage. Miss K. comes to the end of her story . . .) You see, I was really bad.

Counsellor: Okay, your behaviour showed that you were angry. You could not express that anger at your mother or the teacher and you had to do something about your anger at the unfair treament . . . so you attacked other children. But what does that behaviour have to do with your being black?

Miss K: (pausing to think) I don't know. Maybe my mother was right when she used to say that "nothing black is any good".

Counsellor: So you feel badly about being black.

The client at this point was attempting to question some of the negative experiences she had had, but did not as yet recognize that she was, and is, not a "bad" person but that the treatment she received resulted in her "bad" *behaviour*. She still sees *herself* as bad and deserving of bad treatment. Working with such a client demands a great deal of patience and understanding. Here is the professional's role.

- Help the client to recognize and deal with the source of negative messages as well as the sources which act as reinforcers of the negative self-image. In the case of Miss K, her mother and her teacher were the sources, and the reinforcers are the rejection by the fathers of her children as well as the negative stereotypes that also abound in this, her new environment. Helping the client to explore feelings about those past experiences demands careful handling since the supressed rage at mother, once brought to the surface, is likely to result in severe guilt feelings. The expression of negative feelings towards parents, and indeed adults, in the Caribbean is usually met with great disapproval; this attitude is couched in the well-ingrained proverb "Honour thy mother and thy father . . . " This further explains why children passively accept the judgments of their parents and other adults. It takes a fair degree of growth on the part of the clients before they will express feelings of rage at their parents. The premature expression of such feelings are destructive to the counselling relationship since feelings of shame and guilt are associated with "dishonour" to parents.
- Help the client to identify and appreciate his or her strengths which often go unrecognized. Once he or she can successfully explore feelings towards his or her parents and gain some insight into the dynamics that resulted in a distorted "picture of self" his or her ego is strengthened and the self-image begins to improve. The encouragement of involvement in new activities (such as going to

school, for those with limited formal education) can become positive reinforcers and result in continued ego growth.

In reference to the example of Miss K, the counsellor helped her to come to the recognition of the need to increase her level of education and that, in order to do this, she needed to validate her personal strengths. Miss K chose the task of improving her parenting skills through more effective communication and a better understanding of her children as individuals. Engaging in this task was very rewarding for Miss K since it resulted in a warmer, closer relationship with each child. This accomplishment over a period of six months resulted in a strengthened ego through increased feelings of worth and pride in herself. This growth set the stage for her to begin to deal with her feelings of ambivalence towards her mother.

Miss K in the interview which follows was talking with a feeling of pride about her accomplishments.

Miss K: It feels good when the children and I play and have fun. You know my mother and I never did that.
Counsellor: How does that make you feel now?
Miss K: Not good. That's why it was so hard for me to learn to have fun and talk with my children. My mother was terrible sometimes.
Counsellor: Were you afraid of her?
Miss K: Yes. Nowadays when I think of some of the things she did to me I feel bad.
Counsellor: Do you mean sad?
Miss K: (shaking her head) Yes, terrible.
Counsellor: How about . . . angry?
Miss K: (in a grave voice) If I ever allow myself to get real mad, I believe I would kill somebody.
Counsellor: You are afraid of being angry.
Miss K: Yes. I don't want any more trouble and God would strike me dead.

Following this the counsellor proceeded to help the client recognize that feeling angry is a normal human reaction to cruel treatment and rejection and that to talk about anger is a safe way of dealing with such feelings. Miss K's self-concept has become more positive; she is overcoming the anger at the many people who have hurt her and she continues to develop as an "adult" with a more positive self-image.

Fatalism

This attitude is based on an overwhelming belief in the supernatural. Chapter I discussed the importance of the supernatural realm in African cultures and its reinforcement in the New World, due to its effectiveness as a survival mechanism. The attitude of fatalism denies the recognition of personal strengths and the ability to be self-directing, attributing control to some external power.

The client who has a fatalistic attitude makes statements that reflect resignation, "My situation is hopeless; no one can change it; it is useless to try". There are sometimes overtones of belief in witchcraft (obeah, voodoo) and more prominently, strict adherence to literal interpretations of biblical messages. For example, the interpretation often given to "Suffer the little children to come unto Me" is that children must suffer (be scourged, chastised) in order to become worthwhile human beings.

It is not unusual for a West Indian client to state that to change a problematic situation would be to "fly in God's face". This is strongly related to the religious doctrine that supports the necessity to "suffer" as a prerequisite for "salvation" and "heavenly rewards". Hence one of the beliefs that maintains a fatalistic attitude is the merit given to suffering. Reinforcement for the fatalistic attitude is to be found in the unquestioning adherence by individuals with this attitude to the religious tenet that, "the sins of the forefathers are visited upon the third and fourth generation".

With this fatalistic perspective such clients appear to have accepted the problem situation and fail to recognize the role of their own strengths in problem resolution. They seek to resolve their problems by a fervent engagement in ritualistic behaviours from which magical solutions are expected. The conscious effort of the client to seek help, even though of a magical nature, is evidence that this is not pathological denial as in defense mechanisms — masochism, martyr complex, passive aggressive behaviour — but a learned attitude which has been functional for the individual's life-style. Such a client becomes involved with a helping professional under duress and usually as a result of a crisis. The fatalistic attitude presents a formidable block to therapeutic intervention. Such clients are essentially "stuck" having relinquished the power to direct their lives to the supernatural realm.

In working with these clients it soon becomes evident that they have negative feelings about themselves based on tremendous feelings of guilt, unlike the client who has internalized negative stereotypes (discussed in the preceding section). These feelings of guilt are often not explicitly verbalized but the theme of their statements is indicative of deep feelings of unworthiness related to some "sinful" act (their own or their ancestors) or "bad seed". Problem situations are perceived as punishment. Doing "penance" or "suffering" and the engagement in rituals are, as it were, an appeasement to the punishing forces.

Engaging clients with a fatalistic attitude demands a genuine *acceptance* of their right to these perceptions and beliefs. The client's feeling of being accepted allows for the development of a trusting relationship in which the professional helps the client to recognize his or her personal strengths and increase concrete problem-solving abilities. Working within the client's frame of reference the focus in counselling is the redirection of energies (most of which were previously spent in ritualistic behaviours) into the development of more productive life skills.

This, however, does not refute or attempt to change the client's basic beliefs. Psycho-social problems attributed to the supernatural can be interpreted in concrete terms that help the client to perceive the situation as being more manageable within the parameters of his or her abilities as well as his or her belief system. For example, from a professional point of view, a statement such as "the sins of the forefathers . . . " is essentially accurate. The professional can carefully and sensitively illustrate the process by which patterns of behaviour and their consequences are transmitted from parents to children, relating this process to the problem situation that the client attributes to the sins of his or her forefathers.

The emphasis in working with such clients is that of helping them to recognize and build their personal strengths. This process increases self-confidence and improves self-image, allowing them to take adult control of their lives. It is crucial for the professional to be keenly aware of the possibility that a client who regularly attends counselling sessions could be approaching this as another ritual and is not really engaged in working towards change. The professional may be perceived as having powers that parallel those in the supernatural realm. Therefore effective intervention with such clients demands ongoing clarification of roles and expectations, as well as a restatement of the goals agreed upon in the contract.

Feelings

The client in crisis, seeking help from a professional, usually expects tangible assistance. This expectation is accompanied by mixed feelings and a lack of experience in identifying and verbalizing feelings, and leaves many West Indian clients confused and frustrated when the professional attempts to solicit feelings. The response by many clients to such solicitations is likely to be "I don't know . . . I don't feel anything . . . it's nothing" or all feelings are labelled anger. The client and the professional are therefore at cross purposes. This indicates a need for reclarification of roles and expectations as well as an explanation of the role that feelings play in decision making and problem resolution, and the need for their identification and verbalization. Helping clients to identify and verbalize their feelings is basically a re-educational process which involves isolating, labelling and modelling feelings, since many clients have confused feelings. This increases the client's self awareness and strengthens his or her ego, which in turn enhances the process of problem resolution.

The unwary professional may have difficulty coping with clients who avoid dealing with feelings by engaging in humour, banter or the use of proverbs, parables, and story telling. These patterns of response do express feelings, even if indirectly. It is therefore important that the professional check the meaning behind these responses which on the surface may appear to be manipulative techniques or defence mechanisms. The following case illustrates an example of the above responses:

The professional had been involved with the "J" family for three months, dealing with marital difficulties as well as the adjustment of 17-year-old Della and 14-year-old Bob to their parents, after a lengthy separation. In the family sessions, Mrs. J had great difficulty expressing her feelings. One day she dropped into the office requesting to see her counsellor. When the counsellor queried Mrs. J's purpose for this unscheduled visit, her response was "I just came to look for you . . . to see how you are doing".

Counsellor: I am fine, thank you. How are you?

Mrs. J: Oh fine — everything is okay. I went to my sister on the weekend — she was having a party — it was fun. I had a good time. How was your holiday?

Counsellor: Fine thanks . . . How are things at home?

Mrs. J: Oh . . . Okay.

Counsellor: How is the family?

(The client has expressed concern about the counsellor, which is genuine, but this could lead to banter, story telling and avoidance. Therefore the counsellor directs the discussion to what she knows has been problematic for the client).

Mrs. J: (Laughs, then pauses) . . . My mother used to say "every dawg have 'im day and every puss have 'im four o'clock".

(Mrs. J's response is in the form of a proverb which means that each person has his hour of "Glory", good times, advantages over others and a consequent hour of reckoning. There are notions of the concept of retribution inherent in this proverb. This response is contrary to Mrs. J's previous statement of being "okay" but she is expressing her feeling of being taken advantage of by the other family members. She is also expressing her resignation to the situation as well as the anticipation of her moment of glory when her husband and children will have their hour of reckoning).

Counsellor: It sounds as though you are feeling hurt, angry and depressed and see your home situation as hopeless. (The counsellor is attempting to help the client to identify and label her feelings).

Mrs. J: (Smiling hesitantly) Yes . . . but it's okay.

Counsellor: It is okay for you to be hurting inside?

Mrs. J: Well . . . it's only for a time. I want to take my children and go on my own.

Counsellor: You feel that going on your own would stop the hurting and disappointment.

Mrs. J: (Looking a little sad) I don't know.

Counsellor: Mrs. J you try to cope with difficulties by being brave and cheerful at all times. From our sessions so far, it is clear that you let your feelings pile up to the point where you blow occasionally and that the family has learnt to dismiss these as "mother's bad spells". You are now feeling ready to blow again but have you let your husband and children know how you are really feeling inside? Do they know that you are so hurt you are considering separation?

Mrs. J: They must know how I feel but I have not told them that I want to separate.

Counsellor: So you have discussed your feelings with them.

Mrs. J: No . . . they should know because they are my family.

Counsellor: Do you mean that because you live together they should sense what you are feeling inside?

Mrs. J: Of course . . . well . . . shouldn't they?

Counsellor: They might not be sensing your real feelings since you usually appear cheerful. For instance, when you came into the office you looked cheerful and you said everything was okay and yet you were really feeling quite sad.

Mrs. J: (Laughing heartily) . . . You know me well.

Counsellor: You are laughing again.

Mrs. J: You know they say "laughter is good for the soul".

Counsellor: Yes, but you sometimes use laughter to cover up important feelings, which you need to share with your husband and children so that they can really understand you.

Mrs. J: Yes . . . I would like it if we understood each other but sometimes I dont' really know what I feel, and I don't know what to say to them. I usually get angry and say nothing or scream and yell.

Counsellor: When you do not understand your feelings it is difficult to talk about them and may be a little scary too.

Mrs. J: Yes it is kind of scary.

Counsellor: Is it also scary to share your feelings with me?

The session continues focusing on Mrs. J's feelings, helping her to identify and talk about them. She comes to the decision to work at sharing her feelings with the family.

The unscheduled visit of client to an agency is indicative of having a need. While most non-West Indians are likely to state this need clearly, many West Indians engage in banter and indirect messages which mask feelings and avoid expressing this need. Unscheduled visiting, however, does not always indicate the existence of a problem. There are those clients who make social visits out of appreciation and friendship. Bantering is not always a way of avoiding but can be the West Indian's style of expressing nervousness, testing, or establishing contact. In the above case example, Mrs. J needed to discuss her situation but tried to avoid this with a mask of cheerfulness, laughter and expressions of concern for the counsellor. She has always had difficulty verbalizing her feelings and in this session, she attempts to do so with the use of proverbs. The counsellor's understanding of the proverbs facilitates the counselling process and helps Mrs. J to attempt a more constructive manner of expressing her feelings. The implication here is that professionals who are unfamiliar with these kinds of proverbs need to request clarification from the client. This attempt to gain a better understanding of the client and his or her frame of reference further confirms for the client the professional's genuine acceptance and caring.

Story Telling as a Means of Expressing Feelings

"Story Telling" can be defined best as a description of situations and experiences, which includes dramatization of the minutest detail and is tantamount to painting a clear, vivid and exciting picture. This effect is created by an interesting use of language, as well as non-verbal cues which depict a great deal of imagination and creativity. The colourful blend of proverbs, parables, coined words, deliberate misuse and incorrect pronunciation of words, synonyms, antonyms and irony, accompanied by innovative non-verbal cues, is used in conveying sarcasm, wit, insults, humour and in story telling. The uninformed perceive this as an inferior form of communication, ignoring its richness, creativity and historical significance. This style of communication with its origins in West Africa was of survival value during the slavery era and has survived among Blacks in the New World as a means of coping with oppression and frustration.

This creative use of language is an aspect of West Indian culture deserving of special attention as it relates to the counselling process. This is crucial since the counselling milieu, with its emphasis on communication, provides an ideal opportunity for this creative style of language. Story telling is a legitimate vehicle for sharing information and feelings and is not necessarily a defence mechanism. With the purpose of the interview in mind, the professional accepts the story telling and is sensitive to pertinent information but works at keeping the client "on track" avoiding unnecessary detail. Sensitivity to this issue is crucial when working with couples or families where, if the story telling is allowed to go unchecked, the interview could become a debating forum with the expectation that the professional take sides or act as a judge. The story told by the client provides diagnostic material and is the client's attempt at establishing contact and expressing feelings. The professional, therefore, uses the client's "story" to encourage the expression of feelings which enhances the development of self-awareness.

Anger

In Chapter I we discussed the conflicting attitudes towards authority resulting from the kinds of authoritarian structures in the Caribbean. This section will focus on working with clients who have developed dysfunctional behaviours for coping with oppressive authority. Lipsky's article on "Internalized Oppression" makes reference to the manner in which patterns of internalized oppression have influenced the child-rearing techniques of Black parents. These techniques, intended to prepare children for the harsh realities of Black existence, result in the destruction of the children's self-confidence and in effect leave them unprepared for coping. The children socialized by well meaning but extremely authoritarian adults, are unintentionally invalidated by "fierce criticism and fault finding".[30] This severely restricts the children's attempts to develop the personal skills necessary for coping effectively with the oppressive situations they are certain to face as adults.

Individuals who combat the assaults of "criticism" and "fault finding" attain a modicum of dignity and self-confidence. Those who succumb internalize these negative messages that inhibit the development of a positive self-image. This positive self-image enhances the development of self-confidence, feelings of personal power and independence, i.e. power to be assertive and self-directing, which allows the individual the possibility of leading a productive and meaningful life, which many have accomplished. However, these socializing techniques have also contributed to the development of survival or "getting by" behaviours that ultimately prove dysfunctional. We have come to recognize these as:

- a stance of powerlessness and dependency, due to repressed anger from the internalization of negative messages;
- hostile and aggressive attitudes and behaviour, in response to these negative messages, developed in a system that discouraged assertiveness in children;

- manipulation as a means of meeting needs when social systems are perceived as oppressive and insensitive.

A — The Powerless and Dependent Client

Powerless and dependent clients present themselves in a manner that says "I cannot do for myself . . . you as the authority must do for me, . . . I do not know anything, . . . I can do nothing right." Individuals in this situation usually have an immature outlook on life. They grew up in a culture with authoritarian systems in which credit was given by the authority figure for obedience rather than for the successful performance of tasks in response to given direction, so they strove for the ultimate goals of obedience as well as the avoidance of criticism and faultfinding. Inherent in attaining these goals is the learning of a variety of skills. They failed, however, to recognize these skills as personal achievements, giving credit instead to the authority figure who directed them in the performance of these tasks, for example the client who is a skilful seamstress but fails to recognize this as a personal talent. She gives credit to her mother who instructed her in acquiring the skill. She credits herself only with having been "obedient" to mother's instructions and has not incorporated this accomplishment into her self-concept. Individuals who grew up in such a situation have had minimal practice at decision making and self-direction and come to doubt their abilities in these areas. Therefore they are afraid to take risks, feel powerless and remain psychologically dependent on authority figures.[31] Clients in this position are, however, usually ambitious, hard-working and strive to maintain financial independence. This apparent paradox exists because of the high value placed on material self-sufficiency.

Many non-West Indians mistakenly assume that West Indians feel comfortable in accepting financial assistance (welfare and mother's allowance). The vast majority of West Indians, however, share the view that acceptance of such assistance is demeaning and defeats their purpose in migrating.

The professional working with such an individual needs to be aware of the fact that limited formal education, the lack of skills that facilitate coping with North American systems, and the existence of racism, can reinforce feelings of powerlessness and dependency. Effective intervention necessitates the professional's sensitivity in assessing the client's REAL need for dependency. It is crucial that the professional differentiate between therapeutic dependency and dependency that is a manipulative technique or a defence mechanism (the client's resistance to taking adult responsibility for himself or herself). Therapeutic dependency is basically a process of nurturing that allows for ego growth and the development of constructive life skills.

Where powerlessness and dependency are clearly the operative defence mechanisms, this is often indicative of repressed feelings of rage. In this position of "powerlessness" the client appears completely passive. However, unlike the "passive-aggressive" individual who uses passivity to manipulate, (an indirect expression of rage) the powerless client, fearful of uncontrollable "acting out", never expresses rage but is very likely to manifest psychosomatic symptoms.

Feelings of powerlessness and dependency are also manifestations of a negative self-concept, as well as an almost total negation of self. The individual's physical appearance is one of neglect. The posture indicates defeat. Movements are "sluggish". The speech is monotone. Personal experiences are often related without evidence of emotional affect, giving the impression that the experiences are those of another. The individual portrays behaviour similar to symptoms of depression but, unlike the depressed individual, there is the absence of affect, and the powerlessness and dependency are a style of functioning (a life script).

A classic example of such a client is Miss K, discussed earlier. It will be noted that this client, in all her previous sessions, had never mentioned her anger at those who had hurt her in the past. Even after several months of therapy that focused on the development of life skills, the improvement of her self-concept and dealing with what appeared to be symptoms of depression, Miss K remained "stuck". The counsellor by then had come to recognize that Miss K was really quite dependent. Her reluctance to follow through on simple tasks was indicative of her "life script" of powerlessness and dependency. This was the core issue stemming from her deep-seated rage. At this point, the counsellor attempted to help her explore her feelings of anger, but her immediate response was that of fear at doing so.

The goal of therapy with clients who manifest this "life script" is to dissipate deep-seated anger. This frees clients to use their energies more constructively in the development of life skills that lead to increased personal power and psychological independence.

B — The Hostile and Aggressive Client

Clients whose attitude and behaviour are hostile and aggressive are very often displaying frustrations at their inability to be in control of their own lives. They are caught in a bind. On the one hand, society demands that they be in control of their own lives. On the other, they are confronted with a number of barriers that make the realization of this expectation very difficult and often impossible. They are of highly visible minority status in a society where there is racism and discrimination, which prevents Blacks from gaining power. In addition, coping with large impersonal bureaucratic systems can create tremendous feelings of frustration, which reinforces their hostility. These combined variables have the effect of impeding the process of acquiring feelings of personal power and control of one's life. In essence, such individuals feel powerless, particularly on the job and in their dealings with large social systems. They therefore exert power in the safety of their "private" lives where they have some sense of control. This dilemma is especially true of males, but is also applicable to females. In an attempt to cope with feelings of frustration, failure and powerlessness, such clients gain a sense of power by behaving in ways that are usually destructive. These behaviours, however, are damaging to the individual as well as to interpersonal relationships, particularly within the family.

The hostile and aggressive client usually approaches the helping professional under duress (e.g. from court order, the Children's Aid Society or the school). Therefore the immediate issue is likely to be that of resentment and hostility at yet another loss of control in directing his or her own life. Working with such clients being forced to seek help is a less than ideal counselling situation, since there is an absence of individual motivation on the part of the client. Contact can be successfully established, however, by "beginning where the client is", which is to deal with their feelings of resentment. Very often these clients mask their feelings by appearing reasonable and cooperative. If skilfully handled, this issue of their most recent loss of control leads naturally into helping them look at their over-all situation and their behaviour in response to frustration and feelings of powerlessness.

In counselling interviews, the statements made reflect attitudes that say . . . I will not change my position of authority (control), even though it is hurting me . . . I will not give up my authoritarian, hostile relationship with my children, even though I am suffering from the lack of closeness with them . . . I will not see my spouse (male or female) as an equal . . . I am the boss . . . I am right.

Such clients (usually present as individuals who are aware of their skills and rights) are highly ambitious, with great expectations of themselves. Unlike the powerless and dependent client, they are self-directed. It is the frustration of their attempts to successfully operationalize these aspects of self that result in hostility and aggression. They very likely perceive the counsellor (black or white) as an agent (another authority figure) of the "oppressive system" that has frustrated their attempts at controlling their own lives. Hence their position is one of ambivalence at best, and the issue of trust is crucial. These clients often attempt to justify their behaviour in an arrogant manner but at the same time there are subtle cues that indicate a desire for the professional's approval and alignment with them. They also engage in testing the professional's acceptance, understanding and trustworthiness as well as the professional's ability to help them according to their agenda.

From experience, we have observed that the issue of authority in counselling triggers considerable controversy. This is understandable in view of the democratic ideology of the helping professions. In an attempt to avoid appearing paternalistic and to avoid being identified as an agent of the "oppressive system" some professionals strive to establish an egalitarian relationship by initiating the use of first names. There is no doubt that client and counsellor are equal human beings. The counsellor, however, possesses certain knowledge and skills from which the client hopes to benefit. Hence, when we speak of authority it is this fact that we address. The professional is an authority on human development and behaviour and is trained to intervene in problematic psycho-social situations. It is the ability to communicate this professional confidence that is the key to using authority constructively. The professional must be highly confident in his or her ability to use this authority constructively and be aware of his or her stance on racial issues. This confidence and awareness enhance the professional's establishment of his of her position as a helpful and caring authority but one who is not paternalistic, will not engage in game playing or allow himself or herself to be manipulated by the client. When this is clearly and sensitively communicated to the client, the counselling relationship allows for greater openness and trust, and the client's real problem will be the focus of counselling. The following case example will illustrate.

Mr. and Mrs. A, parents of three children, were clients with the Children's Aid Society. The A's had requested placement of their 14-year-old son, with whom they were experiencing disciplining problems. This child was Mrs. A's son from a previous union. She had been separated from her son for 10 years and on reunion, many problems of adjustment arose. The counsellor at the CAS assessed that there were multiple family problems and referred the couple to the family agency. In the first session with a black counsellor at the family agency, it was apparent that Mr. and Mrs. A were angry even though they tried to control this. The counsellor was sensitive to their feelings of stress and engaged the couple in exploring these feelings. This exercise revealed that there had been many unresolved frustrations in their personal lives even prior to the arrival of Mrs. A's son. These frustrations were a result of their inability to fulfil their expectations as related to their careers and social mobility. In an attempt to cope with these frustrations, the couple became involved in a subtle power struggle, which created tension in the marital relationship.

Mrs. A's son arrived in this milieu of unresolved conflict. The family's attempts at adjustment to this new member added to the frustrations of the parents and created a crisis situation. Involvement with the Children's Aid Society increased their feelings of frustration as well as their feelings of inability to be in control of their own lives. This situation provided the couple with a tangible opportunity to release their pent-up anger resulting from previous disappointments and feelings of powerlessness. In an attempt to maintain their feelings of power and a sense of control, sessions with the Children's Aid Society counsellor were essentially a "battle of wills" and therefore non-productive. These sessions were intended to improve the relationship between the parents and the child. The parent's agenda to maintain power and control, however, resulted in a power struggle between two authorities — agency versus parents. The Children's Aid Society counsellor, in his attempt to establish an egalitarian relationship with the clients, had consistently insisted that they address him by his first name. Lacking a real understanding of the cultural implications of this kind of approach as well as the underlying dynamics related to the issue of feelings of powerlessness, the counsellor was manipulated into maintaining the client's agenda.

The clients' response to the counsellor's failure to establish his authority, and use it creatively, was clearly demonstrated in a joint interview of the clients with the counsellors from both agencies. The interview dealing with the parent/child relationship and the arrangement of visits was in progress when the Children's Aid Society counsellor, John Smith, asked Mrs. A to be specific about convenient times. Mrs. A angrily shouted: "And you *John* Smith (emphasis on John) are not going to tell me what to do! Ever since I met you, you have been trying to run my life, and my life is my business!" This is an inappropriate response to a request for specific visiting times. Mrs. A's emphasis on the counsellor's first name is indicative of her perceptions of the counsellor's reduced status and her unwillingness to co-operate with "a boy" — someone who is inexperienced and has not achieved professional status. Had the Children's Aid Society counsellor established himself as an authority in his profession, enhancing this with a maintenance of titles, he would have been better able to control interviews and would have established a more productive relationship. He would have avoided the trap of being the object of the A's projected anger. In the ensuing power struggle, he could have helped them to deal more appropriately with their feelings of powerlessness, thereby gaining their co-operation in working to improve family relationships.

C — Manipulation

Many people who feel the pressure of oppression resort to manipulation as a means of survival. This issue is deserving of special attention in reference to black people, since manipulative behaviour is one of the negative stereotypes with which blacks have been labelled. Clients resort to manipulative behaviours in a variety of situations but this behaviour occurs more frequently with those who are hostile and aggressive. The latter usually engage in a great deal of projection and the professional's attempt to encourage introspection and insight development is avoided by some manipulative technique.

It is crucial that the professional make a clear distinction between manipulation that is a survival mechanism developed to cope with oppressive systems, and those manipulative behaviours that are a manifestation of pathology, as in character disorders. The distinguishing factor between these two is that, in the former, one resorts to manipulation under pressure and has accompanying feelings of guilt; in the latter, manipulation is an acceptable "way of life". Recognizing this distinction is an absolute necessity, since one of the negative stereotypes of blacks is that "all blacks are lazy, dishonest and manipulative". This is not to deny the existence of character disorders among black people. What we are emphasizing is that professionals avoid falling into the trap of accepting a negative stereotype as "a part of black culture" and allowing this to influence assessment and counselling techniques.

It is challenging to work with clients whose manipulative behaviours create a hindrance in the counselling process and a block in growth and development. Helping such clients demands confrontation that is sensitive and well timed. We recognize that, for any number of reasons, clients resort to a variety of manipulative tactics. For the black client, one of these can be claims of racism directed either at social systems at large, or at the professional. Hence here again the professional (black or white) must be honestly aware of his or her stance on racial issues, since claims of racism can be a manipulative tactic by the client to avoid looking at and resolving a problematic situation. An acceptance of the existence of racism frees the professional from taking a defensive position and allows for engagement of such clients in an objective exploration of their perceptions. This kind of acceptance and exploration facilitates accurate diagnosis and will enhance the establishment of trust.

The Supernatural: Religion, Magic

In Chapter I we discussed the importance of supernatural beliefs as a survival mechanism during slavery. The discussion focused on religion and magic. Many individuals, particularly those who have advanced in social status, are involved in the more orthodox religious practices. There are others, however, who have been denied access to the education system and social mobility, who rely heavily on magical forces. Poverty and the general difficulties of their existence reinforce this dependency. There are also instances where the more privileged will, under severe stress, revert to magical practices.[32] In this section the discussion will focus on those individuals who, due to an existence of inescapable oppression, have come to depend on religion in a "magical" sense and "magical" practices as their only means of alleviating stress and feelings of powerlessness.

Religion

This reliance on external forces for problem resolution suggests the existence of a fatalistic outlook on life. "Good" as well as "evil" are attributed to forces beyond human control. Religion is not perceived as a philosophy that helps the individual in the development of personal strengths, nor as a source of guidance, but as some magical force that will "protect against" or "correct" an unfavourable situation. The expectation is that somehow problems will automatically disappear if the "proper" rituals are performed. The general attitude is that problems are caused by supernatural forces; therefore supernatural intervention is sought for problem resolution. It is difficult, in conversation with such an individual, to detect any clear dichotomy between religion and magic. Both are combined into one mystical force. Identifiable religious practices are based on literal interpretations of the Bible, however, and the favoured passages are those that convey punitive messages instilling fear (one needs to be "afraid" of God, who is ever watchful and ready to punish misdeeds). An example of a punitive message most often repeated is: "If thy right arm offend thee, cut it off". "Right arm" is often translated to mean relatives or friends.

Magical thinking presents a formidable challenge in the counselling situation since the client's expectation from his or her request for help usually has magical overtones, which indicates an expectation of instant solutions. When this expectation is unfulfiled after *one* interview, the individual's response is usually counselling does not work. Clients who hold these attitudes usually perceive problems as having been caused by someone or "something" beyond their control. Hence one waits for "something" to occur or for someone to do "something" rather than attempting to help oneself.[33] This attitude is in direct conflict with the counselling premise, which is based on the client's ability to "do for himself or herself" and the principle of self-determination. What we are suggesting here is that the professional needs to clarify his or her role, as well as the concept of counselling. Usually such clients do not voluntarily seek the services of a counselling agency but are referred by some other professional. Their approach to the agency is generally one of ambivalence. "If supernatural forces have not been able to help, how can a mere mortal?" Their statements usually convey the message that, "suffering (the problem situation) is a good experience — it cleanses the soul — God has chosen to make them suffer; therefore to change such suffering would be to incur God's wrath", or problems are dismissed with the statement "God will provide". The professional's sensitivity in making an assessment of such clients is crucial since the client's statements could be inaccurately perceived as a symptom of pathology. A basic knowledge of the Bible is helpful since biblical teaching is intrinsic to the client's value system. Such knowledge is a useful tool which can be used by the professional to engage the client in a meaningful process enhancing the client's feeling of acceptance. We have found that the combination of religious doctrines and psychological concepts is extremely valuable in the counselling process.[34]

The purpose of counselling is to help clients to use their religious beliefs positively, increase life skills, and build ego strengths and problem-solving abilities, rather than to change their basic religious beliefs. Clients' rigid adherence to punitive biblical messages and their expectations of magical intervention are an inhibition to personal growth and development. Furthermore, when these punitive messages are put into practice, this results in destructive behaviour, which creates problems for the individual. For example, the client who has put a rebellious adolescent out of the home finds support for this action in the biblical quotation previously mentioned. The child is perceived as the "offending right arm" and is therefore cut off from the family. In keeping with the principle of "tuning in" and "staying with the client" an effective response by the counsellor would be, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us" or "Forgive thy brother seventy times seven".

Another example is the client who neglects to initiate problem resolution, believing in the statement "God will provide". Responses that facilitate engagement are statements that help the client to explore the meaning of this statement, with the ultimate goal of broadening his or her definition of God's help. For example, God has provided the client with the ability to think and develop personal strengths that make problem resolution possible; God has provided community resources, including the skills of the professional, which can be helpful to the client in stressful situations. These responses in effect provide information and a counter to punitive biblical messages, thereby helping clients to gain a broader perspective of their situation. It moves the client from a childish segmented understanding of biblical teachings towards a meaningful adult and whole appreciation of these teachings. The professional's ability to respond within the client's frame of reference enhances the client's feeling of acceptance and safety, establishing a working relationship in which the client can begin to take the risk of sharing deeper feelings.

Magic — (Witchcraft, Voodoo, Obeah)

The role of magic in the lives of the oppressed is similar to that of religion. The belief in witchcraft, voodoo or obeah is based on fear and lack of understanding of unfamiliar phenomena. It is the individual's way of making sense of the universe and is not necessarily indicative of pathology. Clients who believe in magic do not openly admit to these beliefs, unlike clients who readily admit to their religious beliefs. They usually make vague statements that implicitly say: "somebody did something to me" (meaning "a spell has been put on me") or "something funny is going on", but fails to elaborate due to the fear that these perceptions will be ridiculed or dismissed. When faced by stressful situations, such clients expend much time, energy and money seeking the services of teacup readers, palmists and those who practise various methods of witchcraft. Their approach to a counselling agency is only by referral and they follow through on the referral only because the magical resources have failed to meet their needs.

Magical beliefs can present a block to the counselling process, so effective intervention demands an acceptance through understanding of the client's perception. When this is done in a supportive atmosphere, clients are encouraged to elaborate on their perceptions. This elaboration provides useful information without which the professional cannot make an accurate assessment. Adherence to magical beliefs serves a specific purpose for the individual. These beliefs meet certain psychological needs that stem from chronic oppression, feelings of powerlessness and a weakened ego. Hence the goal of counselling in this case, as well, is to help the client gain feelings of power and the encouragement of ego growth. The professional who gains the client's trust and confidence by presenting himself or herself as a knowledgeable person with his or her own kind of "magic" creates the charisma so necessary for engaging these clients. This can be accomplished by doing two things:

- Accept clients' perceptions of their experiences with magic. Something occurred that has resulted in these perceptions. Therefore rejection or denial of their story, even though "far-fetched" or bizarre in appearance, is not helpful. Furthermore, such a rejecting response on the part of the professional shows a disregard for the principle of acceptance.
- Help clients to understand apparently bizarre events and their traumatic effect on them. This can be accomplished by
  (a) providing rational explanations for "bizzare" actions or events;
  (b) explaining the client's experience of trauma in psychological terms using simple language and graphic concrete examples.

The following profile is an example of such a client in the counselling situations.

Mr. W, the victim of a learning disability, which long had gone undiagnosed, was unable to read and write. He suffered severe ridicule and emotional abuse as a child as a result of the disability. He was successful at learning a trade and was "handy" in many other areas. He also learned to sign his name and was able to conceal his illiteracy, which was a source of great embarrassment for him. He met and married Mrs. W who accepted his illiteracy. She had a fair degree of education and helped him to cope in his business affairs. Their marital relationship soon deteriorated due to financial over-extension resulting from Mr. W's understandable desire to be successful. He invested all his energies and money in many business ventures, all of which ultimately failed. His desire to conceal his illiteracy resulted in unsound investments and subsequent bankruptcy. He continued to deny that his disability played a significant role in his disappointments, however.

His compensation for his deep feeling of inadequacy was to blame it on "magic". He saw his wife's family, who were aware of his disability, as having "done something to him". On listening to Mr. W's transactions with his in-laws, it was clear that he had never felt able to relate to them on an equal basis. His dilemma was exacerbated by his attempts at over-compensating denial of his illiteracy in their presence. Each encounter with his in-laws was to him a demeaning experience, which added to his feelings of insecurity, inferiority and alienation. Unable to understand his emotional responses to these painful encounters and the dynamics involved, he became fearful and suspicious of his in-laws. He began to misinterpret gestures or friendly overtures from the family and made the deduction that they were "responsible" for his business failures. Mr. W sought help for his situation from a series of teacup readers and persons involved in the practice of obeah who confirmed that "something was happening to him". After unsuccessful daily consultations with these practitioners and increased family tensions, Mrs W (who does not share his belief in magic) successfully induced him to come to the family agency with her.

After several sessions of support, encouragement and building trust, the counsellor was successful in beginning to help Mr. W unravel the intricate dynamics of his life experiences that had culminated in his present emotional state. He was finally able to talk about his illiteracy and accept the centrality of this inadequacy to his problematic situations and ongoing emotional stress. The counsellor also helped him to recognize that his fear of talking about his "secret" openly with his in-laws was a way of giving them power to manipulate him into painful situations. Also, that his lack of understanding of the dynamics gave rise to excessive feelings of anxiety, which he interpreted as the result of a magical spell. Mr. W is learning to recognize and deal effectively with feelings of anxiety and has made the decision to go to school.

Where clients appear to be obsessed by their magical beliefs and genuine efforts to engage them continue to fail, this is usually indicative of pathology. These clients have lost touch with reality and have relinquished control of their entire existence wholly to the realm of magical forces. The most obvious symptom presented by such clients is severe paranoia. Usually they have spent a great deal of time and money consulting with witchcraft practitioners, some of whom are unfortunately greedy, dishonest opportunists. These practitioners capitalize on clients' fears by warning of impending dangers, which convinces clients to return time and time again for protective rituals. In essence, clients are maintained in active crisis for extremely long periods, which is costly for the clients and profitable for the practitioners. When clients can no longer afford the exorbitant cost, they are refused further service and left in a state of active crisis. Many such clients get into unmanageable debt, which further exacerbates their problems. The emotional state of these clients, in an initial interview, is such that attempts to engage them are futile, and there are indications that psychiatric intervention is necessary.

The following is an example. A 34-year-old client is referred by a church minister whom she had asked to exorcise evil spirits from her flat. The minister, on visiting her flat, found her behaviour so bizzare that he referred her for counselling. Her request from the professional in the agency was for a plane ticket, or money to purchase one, so that she could return to the Caribbean immediately. There she hoped to find a "good" obeah man because those in Toronto were "no good". She had spent her life savings using their services over a two-year period, to no avail. She believed the "spell" was still on her, and her "unreasonable" landlady would not allow her to do the necessary things to rid her flat of the ghosts. She was now staying with friends since she felt that she could no longer remain in her flat. She had not worked for two years because of the "spell" and she wanted to get back to work. The following is a summarized excerpt from the only interview she had at the family agency.

Counsellor: Miss P, the agency cannot provide you with the means to return to the West Indies.

Miss P: (very agitated) What am I going to do? I have no more money; my daughter needs things and I can't work in this condition!

Counsellor: You have a daughter? (This information was not previously revealed.)

Miss P: Yes . . (produces a photograph of a very attractive young woman). She came here two years ago. She was living with my mother since she was four months old.

Counsellor: Yes . . .

Miss P: I came to Canada and worked hard to send for her. In the 16 years I have been in Canada I didn't visit her once. Just worked and saved. Now she is here I can't even buy her the things she needs. Like bad luck a few days after she came here this thing take a set on me. (Translated: Unfortunately a few days after she arrived, the spell fell on me).

Counsellor: You feel badly that you had not seen your daughter for such a long time and, now that she is here with you, you are broke and unable to provide for her as you would like to?

Miss P: Yes . . . and even now, because of *this thing,* I had to leave her alone in the apartment.

Counsellor: You are concerned about leaving her alone. (The counsellor tries to help the client explore her feelings toward her daughter, as it is possible that guilt feelings, or anxiety about her ability to be a parent to this young woman who is a virtual stranger, are at the root of her emotional state.)

Miss P: No, it's *this thing* that concerns me. I know my daughter is okay. I 'phone her every day.

Counsellor: So you are concerned about her.

Miss P: No, I'm worried about how I can get back home (the West Indies) to look about *this thing.*

Counsellor: Tell me about this thing.

Miss P: You know . . .

Counsellor: I am not quite sure that I know. Would you please explain it for me?

(Miss P described an unpleasant scene she had with her best friend "who can do things", meaning obeah, shortly after the arrival of her daughter. At this time the friend had threatened to "obeah" her. Miss P was sure that this was carried out the next day during a telephone conversation between herself and the friend.)

Counsellor: What did your friend say to you on the telephone?

Miss P: Nothing much. We talked as if everything was as usual. But when I put 'phone down "it lick me" (meaning the spell was on).

Counsellor: How did it feel?

Miss P: I was lying on my bed and suddenly it was like ice water, then hot water, running down my back. I was shivering all night and could not sleep.

Counsellor: Like having a fever? . . . Were you afraid? (The counsellor is again attempting to engage the client in exploring her reactions to 1) the threat from the friend, 2) the calm 'phone call after their heated argument, or 3) whether she was in fact physically ill. These attempts also failed.)

Miss P: No, No, it was what she *put on me* and it's still going on.

(She went on to describe the presence of ghosts in the flat and how sometimes she is unable to walk when "it lick my foot" — meaning the spell is affecting her legs.)

Counsellor: How do you deal with the problem with your legs?

Miss P: I went to the doctor but he didn't help. He says nothing is wrong with me. But I know something is wrong.

(She begins to shiver and mumble incoherently.)

Counsellor: Is something happening now?

Miss P: (extremely agitated) The hot and cold down my back.

Counsellor: Have you ever had malaria?

(This is another attempt at some rational explanation for these reactions.)

Miss P: No, I don't really believe in *those things*.

(Client is denying her belief in obeah, even though she is so obsessed with it that she thought the counsellor said obeah instead of malaria.)

Counsellor: I meant *malaria fever*. Have you ever had it?

Miss P: No. My parents taught me that those things are evil so I don't believe in it. (She apparently hears obeah again.)

(The counsellor explains the disease and the fact that sufferers sometimes have spells of shivering similar to what she was experiencing.)

Miss P: Oh, I never had it. This is just the spell working on me. I have to get back home (the West Indies) and find somebody "good" to help me.

The counsellor's efforts to encourage the client to see another doctor were refused, as was the suggestion of a follow-up appointment. She left the agency very disappointed that she had not received help to make her trip back to the West Indies.

It was clear that psychiatric intervention was necessary. The counsellor contacted the minister who had referred her, requesting that he encourage her to make such an appointment. Miss P's severe emotional stress apparently was the culmination of a series of anxiety-provoking events which came in rapid succession:

- the shock of meeting a well-developed adolescent daughter whom she last saw at four months of age;
- anxiety about her ability in parenting this adolescent, since she was parenting for the first time;
- guilt feelings about her lengthy separation from the child;
- the conflict with her friend and the ensuing threat;
- the calm telephone conversation, which was not congruent with her expectation and therefore did not alleviate the unresolved conflict;
- the increased state of anxiety in response to the 'phone call which was manifested in physical symptoms.

Unable to understand the dynamics of her situation, Miss P attributed her experiences to the realization of the threat and sought relief from an obeah practitioner who confirmed her diagnosis and warned her of even further danger. The practitioner performed rituals and gave her specific instructions for added protection. She was not allowed to perform these because of her landlady's objections and this increased her anxiety. Miss P sought further help from a series of such practitioners whose predictions, accompanied by her decreasing financial resources, resulted in her ever-increasing anxiety and panic.

Working with magical thinking is challenging but it is not impossible to engage a client, except in those cases that indicate the need for psychiatric intervention. Having engaged the client who depends on religion "in a magical sense" or on magical practices, the professional needs to be continuously aware of the client's interpretation of "help". Counselling could become another ritual in which there is an absence of internalization. The client may faithfully attend sessions but there can be little or no evidence of growth, implying the need for frequent "checking out" and confrontation.

A Word About Family Interviewing

The attitude of some West Indian parents towards children can also be challenging in the engagement of these clients. Where it is necessary to work with the total family, it is expedient to remember that in the

Caribbean context, generally, "children are seen and not heard", and there is resistance to having them involved in the affairs of adults. Therefore, parents' expectation in the counselling situation is that the professional will solicit information as to family problems only from them. Children, even when they have parental permission to speak, are generally expected to make statements that concur with those of their parents. Opinions and perceptions of children are deemed to be invalid. Furthermore, in the presence of the children, parents very often make derogatory statements about their children, unaware of how these statements affect the children. Children are not perceived as individuals who experience problems on a personal level. After all, parents supply *all* their needs, i.e. food, shelter, clothing, toys, and send them to school. How could they have problems?

Working with such families demands a great deal of sensitivity and patience. In initial interviews, children are usually silent and very often sullen while parents complain extensively about them. These complaints are generally accompanied by statements as to parental sacrifices and struggles on behalf of the child or children who show a lack of appreciation by creating problems. These problems may range from poor academic performance, anti-social behaviour, withdrawal, slow physical development to suicidal gestures.

Engagement of such families in the counselling process usually necessitates seeing the parent(s) alone initially in order that the professional may establish rapport with them without simultaneously alienating the child or children. This also gives the parent(s) the opportunity to ventilate their concerns and frustrations; allows the professional to begin exploring family dynamics while giving support and encouragement; and also allows for the building of understanding and trust. During this process the professional makes an assessment and plans strategies that will facilitate family group interviewing. One of these strategies may be the necessity to interview the child or children without their parent(s).

The suggestion of intervention by way of family sub-groups may appear to be contrary to theories that promote working with total family systems. We caution professionals against premature parent-child confrontation, however. For example, a parent who unwittingly makes destructive statements about the child, in his or her presence, is likely to expect the professional to agree with these statements. Should the professional encourage the child to respond honestly and the child does, the parent may feel betrayed and feel that the professional is aligned with the child, encouraging him or her to be disrespectful. Such a situation may often result in termination.

When the parent(s) and child or children are seen separately and some rapport has been established, the professional requests permission to share some information, usually the least threatening, in a joint interview. Building rapport in this manner may be a lengthy process of many interviews, but the goal is to prepare parent(s) and child or children to work at their problems as a total family.

Although preparation for family interviews is important for both parent(s) and offspring, the emphasis is on that of the parent(s). The key issues for the latter are helping them to:

- recognize their children as individuals with their own opinions, feelings and perceptions;
- develop constructive patterns of communication;
- understand that in Canada child-rearing practices attempt to encompass the principles of democracy; since children learn about individual rights at school from their Canadian peers, continued adherence to Caribbean authoritarian child-rearing practices will create ongoing conflict in the home;
- recognize that some of their child-rearing practices are in violation of the Child Welfare Act.

The key issues in preparing children for family group interviews are:

- helping them to express their feelings;
- validation of these feelings by the professional; this helps them to develop trust in adults;
- encouraging them to co-operate with their parents, since some children who have gained knowledge about the Child Welfare Act use this information to manipulate their parent(s); in cases where such a situation arises, sensitivity is crucial; if parents feel they have lost control over their children, they could terminate counselling.

Summary

In this chapter we have shared with the reader those approaches that we have found effective in engaging the West Indian client in the counselling process. These approaches are not new but are based on a different emphasis and reinterpretations of the principles concerning the therapeutic relationship. This allows for the adaptation of counselling techniques to give recognition to the issues of race, culture and oppression. Professionals' (black or white) self-awareness of, and willingness to change negative feelings about, racial and cultural differences as well as the recognition of the dynamics of oppression are major factors in engaging the client effectively.

Counselling, as it is practised in Canada, is unfamiliar to most West Indians; hence an important aspect of referring and contracting is a clear explanation of this service and process. The issues that make engagement of the client challenging are not common to all clients but where they are present, it is the professionals' genuine commitment to help, and their self-awareness in reference to the principles, that facilitate this engagement. Negative self-concept, fatalism, difficulty in verbalizing feelings, powerlessness and dependency, hostility, aggression and manipulation are *not* part of "the way black people are". Instead, these are learned responses to oppression and racism. Professionals' responsibility to clients who manifest any of these attitudes and behaviours (which have resulted in psycho-social problems) is to help them to redirect their energies into developing constructive coping skills that liberate them from their painful position or situation, thus paving the way for growth and increased integrity. Strong religious beliefs are an important aspect of West Indian culture. Where these beliefs are adhered to in a magical sense, however, and render clients powerless, professional responsibility is not to work at changing these basic beliefs but to help clients to make these beliefs work positively for them. Having engaged the client in a working relationship, the professional can help the client to realize his or her goals by employing any counselling technique at which he or she is skilled.

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THE PROJECT

In this section we take the opportunity to share with our readers details on the three-year West Indian Project which commenced August 1976 and terminated in July 1979. We believe that this information will be helpful to social agencies attempting to undertake similar endeavours with other ethnic minorities. We further believe that the flexible implementation of a social agency's policies and procedures, with a willingness to adapt its generic methods, can be effective in assisting the adjustment of Canadian minority groups to the large community and society. Just such a flexibility and willingness on the part of Family Service Association made this project not only possible, but successful.

As knowledge of the project became widespread, requests for service increased dramatically in terms of direct counselling cases, staff development workshops and family life education activities. Shortly after inception of the project, it was evident that there was a great need for these services in a wide variety of community agencies, as evidenced by the requests for consultation from agencies. Although these requests placed an overwhelming demand on the two family counsellors, the objectives of the project were achieved, largely due to the support, cooperation and encouragement of front line staff and management within our agency.

We, of course, had not anticipated the "mushrooming" of this endeavour, and changes were necessitated in some of our projected target dates, e.g. this writing should have been completed in July 1979, but had to be delayed in view of the many requests for counselling and staff-training sessions which have continued up to the time of writing.

Due to the workload in counselling and training, the research component of the project received less than ideal attention. As a result of the time-activity press on us, the questionnaire, which originally was designed to allow for in-depth statistical analysis, had to be shelved. We present here some of these questions at the end of this section as topics for further research. In lieu of this questionnaire, we do report data from a client profile sheet which provides some basic demographic information on the project clientele.

TABLE 1

West Indian Project Activities over the three year duration —

	Aug. 1976 — Aug. 1977	Aug. 1977 — Aug. 1978	Aug. 1978 — Aug. 1979
No. of Staff Development Workshops	21	17	41
No. of Direct Service Cases (project worker only)	90	123	100
Family Life Education	—	4 series	2 series

West Indian clients as a per cent of the total agency clientele
1976 — 6.7%
1977 — 7.9%
1978 — 11.1%
1979 — 10.3% (Jan. '79 to July '79)

Project Implementation

The planning phase of this West Indian Project had its beginning in September 1975 when the issue of serving West Indians more effectively was brought to the attention of the North Regional Committee of the Family Service Association by a West Indian family counsellor. The decision was made to pursue this issue, and the steps that led to making this project a reality were as follows:

1. The family counsellor, with the support of the committee members and the regional director, prepared a proposal submitted to the Ministry of Culture and Recreation, Citizens' Branch. This branch of the ministry had, as part of its mandate, the helping of agencies in developing policies and programs relevant to the multicultural milieu of Toronto and Ontario. As such, funds were allocated by the ministry to the Family Service Association for realizing this kind of development through the West Indian Project.
2. There were several meetings between ministry and FSA staff to negotiate the goals and objectives of the proposed project.

3. The proposal was approved for joint funding (Ministry of Culture and Recreation and United Community Fund) for a three-year duration, with annual evaluation and renegotiation.
4. A West Indian Project counsellor was hired as the project worker in August 1976. Her initial duty was extensive outreach activities, which involved designing and distributing 1,500 flyers and meeting with professionals throughout the Metro community.
5. The counsellor worked exclusively with West Indian client families of the agency and was accountable to a West Indian Project supervisor, who also provided clinical services to West Indian families.
6. Both counsellors acted as consultants to other agency staff involved with West Indian families, at other FSA offices, as well as staff of other community agencies and organizations.

Location

At the time of the project, the Family Service Association's north region operated out of two offices — Willowdale and Downsview. Since there is a large settlement of West Indians in the Downsview area, the project worker and supervisor were stationed in the Downsview office. In this locale there is a high concentration of publicly-subsidized housing and this therefore contributes certain biases in terms of the data collected, e.g. number of families in subsidized housing.

A large percentage of families lived in the immediate vicinity of this office, but there were also clients from outside the area. At the outset of the project there were clients from as far away as Barrie, Oakville and Oshawa who had insisted on coming to the Downsview office because West Indian counsellors were not available in their respective communities. As our case loads increased beyond manageable proportions, however, we were forced to limit acceptance of new clients to those families living in the Downsview area. Other potential clients were referred to agencies within their own communities; in such cases the two West Indian counsellors in the Downsview office acted as consultants to counsellors in these other communities, where feasible. Furthermore, we found that the distance clients had to travel was a complicating problem for some, often resulting in missed appointments.

Client Demographics

All staff in the north region offices were requested to complete profiles on West Indian clients, but many of these profiles were incomplete and therefore have not been included. The data presented here, therefore, are taken only from those profile forms that are complete on closed cases — a total of 160 cases, which include 263 adults and 378 children (in the homes).

TABLE 2

Project Cases Referral Sources

Source	No. of Cases	%
Friend	35	22
School	29	18
Medical	18	11.5
Telephone book	17	11
Previous contact	14	9
Private agency	10	6
Family court	7	4.5
Ontario Housing Corporation	4	2.5
Psychiatric institution	4	2.5
Children's Aid Societies	4	2.5
Various other government agencies	4	2.5
Police	3	2
Relatives	2	1
Media	2	1
Lawyer	1	.5
Employer	1	.5
Unknown	5	3
Total	160	100

Table 2 reveals that the largest number of clients came to the agency through the advice of friends.* This figure is probably evidence of: (1) an attempt by West Indians to maintain the system of informal helping networks, and/or (2) the importance placed on the spoken word vis-a-vis the written. There was no evidence of a client coming to the agency as a result of the community-wide distribution of flyers.

The next highest source of referrals was from staff within the school system. This is strong confirmation of a suspicion many professionals have that a high percentage of West Indian school-age children are experiencing adjustment difficulties. Following through on these referrals is also evidence of the West Indian attitude of assigning a high degree of credibility to teachers, as discussed in the preceding chapter.

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*We use the term "advice" to differentiate from "referral", which here is construed as a process in which a professional directs the client, usually makes the initial contact with our agency, communicates pertinent information relating to the client, and follows this up with a written report.

TABLE 3

Client's Country of Origin

Country	%	No. of Adults
Jamaica	73	191
Guyana	9	23
Trinidad and Tobago	8	22
Barbados	3	9
Other (St. Vincent, Grenada, Aruba, Panama, Antigua, St. Lucia, Haiti)	7	18
Total	100	263

Table 3 reports the number of adults in the 160 cases, according to nation of origin. It will be noted that the number of clients born in Jamaica (73 per cent) far exceeds those born in all the other territories combined. The data does not provide us with any information that could explain this difference. It probably could be due to the following:

1. There are more people of Jamaican origin in Toronto than there are from other West Indian territories.
2. Both counsellors involved with the project are of Jamaican origin; this may have influenced some clients in their decision to request service — again possible evidence of the importance placed on the spoken word vis-a-vis the written word.

TABLE 4

Marital Status of Clients in Project Cases

Marital Status	%	No.
Married	47	75*
married in Canada		(53)*
married in West Indies		(22)
Common-law union	5	8
Separated	22	35
Never married (not common-law)	21	34
Divorced	4	6
Widowed	1	2
Total	100	160

Of the married group above, we can see that more couples were married in Canada than were married in the West Indies. Of the 53 cases who were married in Canada, 41 were involved in common-law unions prior to coming here. This supports our observations, as well as the observations of others, that many West Indians who were involved in alternative mating patterns in their native lands, do marry after migrating and improving their economic circumstances. These data also may be the result of certain immigration regulations with regard to sponsorship, which state that when a man or woman sponsors his or her fiancé or fiancée, they must be married within a period of 30 days. The permission to sponsor is, of course, based on the applicant's economic circumstances. Our data show that 29 men sponsored women and 27 women sponsored men to Canada. It is interesting to note that the total of these sponsorships — 56 — is very close to the total number married in Canada — 53. We must caution the reader against hasty conclusions, however, since some individuals who migrate on an independent basis, meet partners in Canada and marry here.

TABLE 5

Age of Adult Project Clients

Category	Males		Females		Total
	%	No.	%	No.	Adults
20–24	5	6	7	10	16
25–29	16	18	20	29	47
30–34	25	29	26	38	67
35–39	22	25	28	41	66
40–44	9	11	10	15	26
45–49	5	6	1	2	8
50–54	3	3	3	5	8
55–59	1	2	1	1	3
60 +	1	1		0	1
Unknown	13	15	4	6	21
Total	100	116	100	147	263

The larger proportion of clients were between 25 and 44 years of age. This is in keeping with the more general client population within the agency. From a psycho-social perspective, during these years, individuals and families face a number of major adjustments, and some experience difficulty in coping with these adjustments.

Our data Table 10 shows that the two most common presenting problems were marital conflicts and parent/child conflicts. Parent/child conflicts were most common in the 30-44 years category, the age at which many parents experience difficulty in coping with their adolescent children. We also found that parent/child conflicts may often contribute to marital conflicts.

TABLE 6

Education of Adult Project Clients

Category	Males %	Males No.	Females %	Females No.	Total No.
Some elementary school	17	17	6	8	25
Completed elementary school	18	18	20	27	45
Some secondary school	40	40	53	72	112
Completed secondary school (gr. 12 or 13)	18	18	19	26	44
Some post secondary	1	1	1	1	2
Completed post secondary	5	5	1	2	7
Unknown	—	17	—	11	28
Total	100	116	100	147	263

An interesting phenomenon we observed throughout the Project was the number of women who were involved in academic upgrading, largely by attending night school. This observation is witnessed by the

Table 6 data. It will be noted that 53 per cent of females had some high school, whereas 40 per cent of males were in this category. The reasons for this discrepancy are not clear; however, some of the possible contributing factors are as follows:

1. Women, in the hope of escaping employment involving menial labour, improve their level of education.
2. In many families, women have the responsibility of helping children with school work and, where their level of formal education is low, they seek to improve this so as to help their children with school assignments.
3. Although education and upward mobility are equally important for both men and women, there are more opportunities for women to achieve upgrading through programs such as Focus on Change and Opportunity for Advancement.

The discrepancy in level of education and consequent earning power between couples was very often a contributing factor in marital conflict.

TABLE 7

Employment

Status	Males		Females		
	%	No.	%	No.	
Employed	68	79	65	95	
Unemployed					
(U.I.C. Workmen's Compensation, Disability Pension)	13	15			
(U.I.C., Workmen's Compensation, Disability Pension, Family Benefits, General Welfare Assistance)			9	13	
Homemakers	0	0	6	9	
Student (University) (Community College)	4	4	8	12	
Student (Adult Upgrading)	7	8	10	15	
Unknown	8	10	2	3	
Total	100	116	100	147	263

These figures would seem to support our discussion in Chapter III stating that women find employment more readily than men since 13 per cent of the men are unemployed and only 9 per cent of the women. Women seem to find employment in areas not readily available to men, e.g. housekeeping, cafeteria help, garment factories, and other light factory work. Very often employment in these areas is perceived by these individuals as an interim measure. The above figures refer to individuals who have been in Canada for some years (See Table 9.)

Of the 13 unemployed women who were receiving some form of government assistance, nine were single mothers who were receiving family benefits or general welfare assistance. Lack of adequate daycare facilities [illegible] the support of the extended family, while working staggered hours posed multiple difficulties for these mothers. The major problem was adequate care and supervision of their children while they were away at work. When these families were seen at the agency, it was obvious that many of the children would be in serious difficulty if they were not given proper supervision. These mothers were unable to make suitable arrangements for this and had to resign from their jobs, though unwillingly.

TABLE 8

Housing

Categories	Families	
	%	No.
Unsubsidized rental	36	56
Subsidized rental	43	71
Owned home	13	21
Unknown	8	12
Total	100	160

Seventy-one families lived in subsidized accommodation. This large number, almost half the sample, is not unusual in view of the number of single parent families, all of which were mother-led.

TABLE 9

No. of years Project clients had been in Canada

Categories	No. of Males	%	No. of Females	%
1 – 2 years	17	15	14	9
3 – 4 years	24	20	26	18
5 – 6 years	30	26	48	33
7 – 8 years	27	24	44	30
9 – 10+ years	11	9	15	10
Unknown	7	6	0	—
Total	116	100	147	100 263

Table 9 shows that the length of time in Canada varies for males and females, with females being here for a longer period of time. In the categories 3 — 8 years, there are 81 per cent females as opposed to 70 per cent males. This is reflective of West Indian patterns of migration as influenced by early Canada Immigration policies.

It is interesting to note that 56.6 per cent of the total sample of families fell into the 5 — 8 year categories. Many adults served during the project expressed disappointment at not having realized certain goals they had hoped to attain within their first five years of living in Canada. These disappointments give rise to feelings of anxiety and tension, contributing to problematic family transactions and crisis. Usually such families presented multiple problems arising from a host of other variables. Length of time in Canada and its relevance to adjustment seems to be an area deserving of research.

Presenting Problems

Data on the major presenting problems were collected using the following categories:

Marital — interpersonal relationship problems between adults in conjugal or common-law unions.

Parent/child — interpersonal relationship problems between parent(s) and child(ren).

General family — interpersonal relationship problems between total family group.

Individual Personality Adjustment — An individual's personal problems in practical living skills, emotional adjustment, feelings toward self or others, etc.

Environmental — problems related to housing, school, work, recreation, community resources.

These categories, of course, are based on our diagnostic assessments and what clients presented in their initial interviews. Notwithstanding subjective elements we find them a useful construct in summarizing the data.

Table 10 below, is a summary of the families in each category.

TABLE 10

Presenting Problems of Clients in Project Cases

Categories	Families %	Families No.
Parent/child	41	66
Marital	38	60
Individual Personality Adj.	9	15
Environmental	7	11
General Family	5	8
Total	100	160

Associated Problems

Most families in the sample were experiencing multiple difficulties in addition to the major presenting problems.

The most frequent associated problems were: 62 families were experiencing financial difficulties; 32 school-related; 36 in conflict with the law; 35 employment related; 48 depression; 26 adjustment to marital separation.

Children

The outstanding phenomenon we observed throughout the project was the great number of children who had been separated from their parent(s). In the following section we present some demographic information on the children: of the 348 children in these families' homes, only 16 per cent had migrated to Canada at the same time as their parent(s). To be sure, some of the other 84 per cent of the children were born in Canada, at most about one third of the children. (See Tables 11-13.) Even so, over half of these children probably were separated from their parent(s) by the immigration process, a rather outstanding figure, which most would consider predictive of psycho-social problems when they arrive in Canada. This is covered in detail in Chapter III.

TABLE 11

	%	No.
Children who were separated from parents	57	217
Children born in Canada	27	101
Children out of the home, in Canada	3	10
Children still in the West Indies	7	28
Families with staggered reunion	6	22
Total	100	378

TABLE 12

Ages of Children in the Home	%	No.
−1 – 5	27	103
5 – 10	35	131
10 – 15	19	72
15+	19	72
Total	100	378

TABLE 13

Length of Separation			Years in Canada	
Years	%	No. of Children	%	No. of Children
1	15	32	16	43
2	18	40	28	79
3	17	37	22	61
4	16	34	14	38
5	16	34	10	28
6	12	26	6.5	18
7	3.5	8	2	6
8	2	5	.5	1
9	—	0	1	3
10	.5	1	—	0
Total	100	217	100	277*

*This figure includes 60 children who arrived in Canada with their parent(s).

Not included in the above figures are three children, over 16 years of age, who came to the agency as individual clients. Of these, two were separated from their parents for 12 years and the other for 15 years prior to reunion in Canada.

Our data supports the findings of others that problems in adjustment for children seem to reach crisis proportions within three years after arrival in Canada. Sixty-six per cent of those children who were not born in Canada, when first seen at the agency, had been in Canada for up to three years. Of this total, 44 per cent had been here for two years. (Table 13) This is strikingly different from the findings with regard to adults, the majority of whom were first seen at the agency when they had been in Canada between five and eight years. We assume that this finding is highly correlated to the difference in the rate of acculturation between adults and children and seems to be another area deserving of research.

TABLE 14

Reason for Closing of Project Cases

Reason for Closing	%	No.
Coping	37	59
Not committed to counselling	16	26
Request withdrawn	16	25
Appointment not kept	14	23
Referred to psychiatrist	8	12
Discomfort with agency/counselling	4	7
Other family member unwilling to co-operate	4	6
Supernatural obsession	1	2
Total	100	160

In Table 14, the number of requests withdrawn and cases in which appointments were not kept, together account for only 30 per cent. This compares rather favourably with Family Service Association's case outcomes generally and is in keeping with the tendency of some West Indians to agree with authority figures in accepting their direction to contact the agency for counselling. In 26 cases there was such a lack of sufficient commitment to the counselling process that the counsellor and the client agreed to case termination though with the understanding that the client could return at a future date when he or she felt ready to work at the problems. The fact that these clients did keep a minimum of appointments supports what we recognize as a tendency, in some clients, to relate to counsellors and the agency in the same manner as with their traditional informal helping network. This finding has implications for the delivery of service in counselling agencies attempting to meet the needs of clientele from cultures where informal helping networks continue to be operational.

Category of Service at Termination

Statistics prior to 1976 on West Indian clients are unavailable for comparison. Therefore, a random sample of 167 West Indian cases served throughout other agency offices (excluding the office where the project was housed) between January and September 1980 is used here for comparison in Table 15.

TABLE 15

Categories in No. of Interviews	No. of Cases		% of Cases		Total No. of Interviews	
	Project	Agency	Project	Agency	Project	Agency
1	59	88	37	53	59	88
2 – 5	73	61	46	37	215	166
6 – 15	23	16	14	10	196	132
16 & over	5	2	3	1	273	93
Total	160	167	100	100	743	479
					4.6	2.9

The data indicate that a higher percentage of clients involved in the project were engaged in counselling for more sessions than clients in other offices of the agency. The fact that the counsellors involved in the project are both originally from the Caribbean is probably the most significant variable leading to the strong difference between the project average of interviews and the average in other offices, the variation clearly favouring the cultural sensitivity methods of our project.

Professional Implications from the Project

In recent years there has been an upsurge in interest devoted to the issues inherent in the adjustment of immigrants to Canadian communities. Many social and other agencies are now intensely engaged in exploring and developing services that will enhance immigrants' acculturation to and integration into Canada's multicultural milieu. Our West Indian Project is a pioneering effort by a family service agency to better meet the psycho-social needs of a specific ethnic group.

We are deeply appreciative of the opportunity to have worked on this project and, like many other pioneers, we found it an excellent learning experience, stimulating and highly rewarding. As we explored and analysed our counselling of West Indian families, we became more knowledgeable and sensitive to the dynamics involved in the engagement of clients. The Project also helped to confirm our belief that counselling engagement dynamics are crucial in the therapeutic process. Cultural sensitivity is a sine qua non to successful counselling engagement. Since one of the project counsellors also served families other than West Indians, we were able to informally compare the cultural framework of clients. This further confirmed the significance of cultural sensitivity in the successful engagement of clients in the therapeutic process. This approach is relevant to all client groups regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, gender or sexual orientation. We conclude that this approach is the key to cross-cultural counselling.

Having been so intensely involved in this work provided us with the opportunity to gain a more comprehensive perspective on the crucial issues pertaining to migration and adjustment; we go into these in Chapter III. We are, however, cognizant of further issues that relate to the adjustment of all immigrants and the agencies attempting to meet the needs of immigrants: preparation for migration, settlement adjustment, follow-up, ethnic minority senior citizens in the new society, and the special project worker in relation to the total agency.

Preparation for Migration There are endeavours to prepare emigrants for coming to Canada while still in their native land. This is now done through a distribution of informative brochures about various Canadian systems but, by and large, this seems to be rather inadequate. For many West Indians the prospect of imminent migration is accompanied by feelings of anxiety and excitement, which diminish the importance of reading these handouts. Furthermore, even when read, the material may not be at all relevant to an individual's frame of reference, since many of the services described do not even exist in Caribbean nations. In addition, the brochures are very often left behind upon travelling to Canada.

Settlement There are existing services to assist immigrants in settling, but it seems to us that these are predominantly used by individuals who speak a language other than English/French, apparently due to the need to learn English/French. Many assume that English/French speaking immigrants will experience much less difficulty in settling since there is little communication problem. Such an assumption can place these immigrants at a disadvantage, however, since it denies them the opportunity to gain relevant information about their new environment and the services provided and available for them. Thus, settlement services may need to be much more visible to newly-arrived immigrants, certainly at points of entry and even thereafter.

Follow-up Settlement and adjustment can be a lengthy process particularly for immigrants whose cultures are significantly different from that of the Canadian society. Hence it would seem that a follow-up system would be beneficial to individuals from such cultural groups who are in need of this kind of support. We are aware that such a system could be perceived as "discriminatory", but from our experience, we deem that such a system instead would be a preventive measure. For example: Many West Indian families who sought help from the Family

Service Association were at a point of severe crisis due to problems resulting from separation of parent(s) from their child or children, and the subsequent reunion. It is likely that many of these crisis situations could have been averted had a system of follow-up been in place for families whose migration involved separation and reunion.

Ethnic Minority Senior Citizens This topic is deserving of special attention in a cultural context. Many immigrants with cultures in which the extended family system is still operational view aging differently from families with an urban highly technologized culture which fosters the nuclear family. In the extended structure, the aged are accorded great reverence, and have specific roles within the family functioning. Segregation of seniors from the family usually occurs only when constant medical care, that cannot be provided in the home, is necessary. Coming from cultures where these family relationships prevail, many immigrants fear the prospect of spending their senior years in this Canadian society where the norm is that seniors live in specific residences, separate from their families. Many of the clients we saw expressed the hope that they would be able to return to their native lands in their senior years.

Thus, there are implications: (1) that aging is a special area for counselling in the future, particularly for those who are unable to realize their hope of returning to the Caribbean upon retiring and must live according to Canadian norms; (2) that special consideration be given to culture specifics in service delivery to seniors from ethnic minority groups.

The project worker While staff and administration can identify and relate to many issues involved in the integration of a special project into the programs of a social agency, issues relating to integrating the project worker into the agency's professional team are often less identifiable and receive less attention.

The worker on a special project such as we undertook, carries an unusual, though challenging, burden. The worker is designated by the agency administration to perform specific tasks directed to a special client population. The worker is at the same time one of many staff, all of whom carry generic caseloads. This immediately puts the special project worker in the position of being "different", with special status, privileges, expectations and accountabilities. Such a worker is unique, but at the same time part of a unitary service delivery system of the agency. It is essential that, in order to maintain an agency sense of coordination and equilibrium, opportunities be provided for the full integration of the project worker into the staff team through participation in all staff activities. This enhances the project worker's identification with the agency and allows staff to fully support the project worker. Therefore, the successful implementation of a special project is dependent on the integration of the project worker as a member of the professional team through a well-defined plan of ongoing support and communication.

As our project gained community recognition and credibility, the worker came to be seen as an "expert" in all matters involving West Indians, as well as a professional having endless resources. Although in most instances there was support and clear understanding of our goals and functions, very often there were inappropriate requests. These indicated that the community expectation of the worker was to:

- be always available;
- be always open to accepting referrals;
- be always successful with clients;
- advocate within the agency and in the community-at-large for meeting all the needs of all West Indians.

When these inflated expectations were not fully met, the worker was often declared to be negligent. It is for such reasons that the agency had to ensure ongoing support for the project work to prevent the worker succumbing to stress. This support also: provided the opportunity for the agency to become aware of the many needs; identified those areas of need which could realistically be met; clarified agency role and responsibility; helped to keep the focus on the objectives of the project; facilitated further planning of agency activities in regard to serving this client group and other minority groups.

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